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**Chinese Leadership Transition and Developmental
Aspirations: Socioeconomic Realities,
State-Civil Societal Relations and the
Teleological Ambiguities of the “China Model”**

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Chinese Leadership Transition and Developmental Aspirations: Socioeconomic Realities, State-Civil Societal Relations and the Teleological Ambiguities of the "China Model"

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1. Introduction

With the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China concluded on 15th November 2012 and the birth of a new Politburo Standing Committee, the Party thus completed its second orderly hand-over of power in more than six decades of its rule over this most populous country in the world, and today, the world's second largest economic entity. Nevertheless, also marking the year 2012 are various other poignant events that have further strained State-civil society relations in this vast country. Among these, most undoubtedly epitomizing the contemporary sociopolitical dilemmas of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is the proliferation of public protests mainly related to forced demolition and relocation, industrial pollution and official corruption, and related to this, State response to civil rights-defending *weiquan* activism and its treatment of such activists as part of the wider dissident community. The continued unfolding of this systemic crisis has, indeed, to be properly placed in the overall environmental context of the problem of increasingly acute socioeconomic inequality, including its ethnoregional dimension, which in many ways constitute the epitome as well as the root of China's social ills resulted from her recent

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decades of continuous, astounding economic *tour de force* while having stagnated are the modernization and democratization of its political structure and sociopolitical power configuration.

In his cynical take of the teleological hopes invested in the presumed apparent continuous transition of the People's Republic of China from authoritarianism to liberal democracy just like what went through with her East Asian neighbours, especially South Korea and Taiwan, Dirlik and Prazniak (2012) asked three questions: "First is the relationship to the legacies of the revolution of the Party and the people at large, including many dissidents, which is hardly the one-dimensional relationship it is often assumed to be. Second is the relationship of questions of repression and dissent in the PRC to its structural context within global capitalism [...] finally, is there a case to be made that the PRC is better off exploring socialist alternatives in economy, society and politics than emulating models whose future is very much in question, in which case critique should be directed at holding the Party to its promise of socialism rather than its failures to live up to the examples of those who themselves are in retreat from democracy?"

Dirlik and Prazniak's first two questions can be viewed in an integrated context, for State governance and civil societal response in today's China are intrinsically inseparable while opponents of the Communist Party's continuing political monopoly has increasingly based their challenge upon the increasing socioeconomic injustice under CCP rule in the post-Mao era, in facing the "increasing legitimacy" of the Party's authoritarian grip following the last three decade's miraculous economic success of the "China model". This has resulted in a complex situation wherein while the PRC "presently suffers from severe economic and social inequality that may be sustained only by political repression":

It is frequently overlooked, however, that economic and social inequality are products of the very development policies for which the PRC is widely admired. The ironic consequence is that criticism directed at the PRC for its democratic deficit is more than compensated for by pressures to keep up a pattern and pace of development that gives priority to its functioning within the global system over the economic and political welfare of the population. Indeed, the "China Model" has more than a few admirers who look to it with envy against the "inefficiencies" thrown up by popular pursuit of justice in democratic societies.

(Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 287)

Seen in this context, the teleological inevitability implicit in the democracy activists' claim sounds equally hollow as the CCP's continuing upholding of its now ragtag socialist flag in justifying its "moral obligation" to perpetuate its political monopoly, for as Dirlik and Prazniak argue:

Deepening inequality is a pervasive phenomenon of global neoliberalism, of which the PRC is an integral part. Around the globe the predicament of democracy has set off a dialectic of protest and repression that has further thrown its future into jeopardy in any but a formal sense. Within a global context in which democracy is at risk and human rights in shambles, what does it mean for the PRC to be moving toward a more democratic regime?

(*ibid.*)

2. Socioeconomic Dilemmas of Reform

Charles Dickens described the years of the French Revolution as “the best of times” as well as “the worst of times”. The degree of social contradictions that has grown into a highly alarming proportion, not only from the perspective of the masses but also well recognized by the ruling Chinese Communist Party (CCP)¹ as for instance reflected in the amount of spending on the *weiwen*²-related efforts, in China today accompanied by, ironically, an unprecedented economic miracle not only from the Chinese perspective but also the global, since the tragic ending of the 100-day 1989 Tiananmen protests, has indeed made the transposition of Dickens’s well-known adage to present-day China much less preposterous than it might appear to be.

Indeed, in an unusual three-part article, “Hu/Wen de Zhengzhi Yichan” [Hu/Wen’s political legacy]³, written by *Xuexi Shibao*’s deputy editor Deng Yuwen – unusual because *Xuexi Shibao* (*Study Times*) happens to be a magazine run by the Communist Party’s Central Party School (which was headed by current president Xi Jinping, the then presumptive next State president and Party general secretary), hence the article is seen by most as possibly reflecting Xi’s views – Hu Jintao-Wen Jiabao administration’s seven great achievements during the past decade are juxtaposed with ten severe problems it has been considered to be responsible for during the same period. While proclaiming China’s glorious achievements during the reform era as in the first part of Deng’s article posted on 30th August 2012 is commonplace inside and outside the country nowadays (the latter such as views popularized in the recent, tremendously successful works of Martin Jacques⁴ and Ezra F. Vogel⁵), what is far from commonplace is the unconcealed tone of the severe criticisms in the second part posted on 2nd September, which was followed by the third part giving the author’s concluding remarks and recommendations. Expectedly, the three-part article disappeared shortly after posting.

At the heart of such contradictions lies the ultimate project of a State manifested in the single-mindedness in pursuing greater economic prosperity, sometimes dubbed “GDPism”⁶, a frenzied quest that is increasingly unfolding in recent years to be at a terrible social cost, resulting in no small measure from often unchecked power and corruption of CCP cadres, officials and princelings and pervading State-business collusion with little regard for both public accountability and corporate social responsibility. Such is aggravated by the suppression of *weiquan* (rights-defending) activism and persecution of civil rights activists in the name of *weiwen* (maintaining stability) and the alleged unwritten rule of exempting family members of high-level ruling echelon from crime prosecution for the interest of politburo solidarity and party-State legitimacy⁷. Such collusion in service of GDPism⁸ whose achievement in turn lends legitimacy to the regime is referred to in the two suggestions made in Lynn T. White’s study on China, Thailand, Taiwan and the Philippines: “First, opportunities for political support by networks with effective power – sometimes mostly in the state, but often mostly in local business elites – cause economic growth or its lack. Second, such growth, if they can arrange it, strengthens those elites’ capacities as against rivals, in whatever type of regime they have.” (White, 2009: 9)

Table 1 Achievements and Problems of the Hu-Wen Decade (Deng Yuwen, 2012)

Achievements	Problems
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. China became the world's second largest economy, just after the United States of America (US), in comparison with the 6th place in world ranking a decade ago. Beginning to enter the rank of middle-income countries, China has experienced an increase in GDP per capita from US\$1000 a decade ago to US\$5414 by 2011, with her poor population continued to drop to 120 million, thus building a firm material foundation for the year 2020 target of the achievement of a "well-off" (<i>xiaokang</i> 小康) society. 2. Suggestion of new concepts of development, represented by the "outlook of scientific development" and "building of harmonious society". During the key juncture of China's socialist modernization, such new concepts have led to the country's remarkable developmental achievements while also serving to show that CCP is able to keep up with the times, reflect the demands of the era and provide guidance on development. 3. Beginning of advancement in governance openness and a sunshine government. A modern government is an open, transparent government. Only when government information and policy-decision are open and transparent, policy-decision errors and public servants' corruption can be reduced and the government and people can get closer to each other to the largest extent, thus enabling the 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Lack of breakthrough in economic structural adjustment and building of a consumer society during the past decade, being constrained by interest groups including those at the local level. 2. Inability to effectively cultivate, foster and strengthen the middle class which is supposed to be the cornerstone of social stability and prosperity. While in terms of income the middle class has seemed to be expanding in the past decade, such expansion has lagged behind economic acceleration due to the lack of construction of mechanisms fostering the middle class. Examples include the continuing delay in the implementation of income distribution reforms which has led to the inability to close the gap between rich and poor and the inability of those in the low-income group to rise to middle class, high house prices swallowing up consumption capability, etc. 3. Continued existence of the <i>hujia</i> or <i>hukou</i> 户籍/户口 gap and expansion of urban-rural disparity. Due to <i>hujia</i>'s close link to urban public services and local public finance and economic growth, its reform has not been substantial during the past decade. While some middle-size and small cities have loosened their <i>hujia</i> control, the thresholds set are too high for the great majority of the <i>nongmingong</i> 农民工 (rural-to-urban migrant workers) to be absorbed and to change in identity. The stagnation in <i>hujia</i> reforms has also brought about a whole series of problems such as urban-rural contradictions, land-related public finance problems, peasants losing their lands, etc. As a consequence, peasants' interests are being severely eroded

Table 1 (continued)

Achievements	Problems
<p>major social bodies to anticipate government behaviour in order to build a well-ordered, well-regulated government and politics. Openness and transparency is especially important in terms of the government's function in the Chinese society. During the past 10 years, beginning with making known to the public of information on the SARS epidemic, with regulation of government information openness as the sign, and making public of government budget as usual practice, with the development of new media as pressure mechanism, there have been certain improvements in the openness of government behaviour.</p> <p>4. China's entering the World Trade Organization (WTO) has fixed the process of the country's incorporation into the world, making it impossible for the nation to return to the closed-door policy of the past. Although entering the WTO wasn't an event occurring during the past 10 years, the persistence on the open-door policy during the decade and carrying out what had been promised have led China onto an "openness" path of no return, to be incorporated better into the world and to absorb the advanced culture of the West, in order to achieve the nation's century-long target of modernization.</p> <p>5. Preliminary results have been obtained in social construction. Social construction with education, health care, social security, housing and living assistance as the main</p>	<p>during urbanization, leading to the transforming of China's original urban-rural dualist structure into a tripartite structure of peasants, <i>nongmingong</i> and urban residents.</p> <p>4. Population policy severely lagged behind reality, causing rapid aging in demographic structure. Child-bearing is a basic human right but the government has persisted in its rigid one-child policy during the past decade, leading to rapid aging in demographic structure which has adversely affected the nation's economic growth and the enhancement of the standard of provision for the aged, as well as social problems such as losing the only child and gender imbalance, and one-child policy-induced trampling of the rights and interests of the masses that is happening day to day.</p> <p>5. Administrative and utilitarian tendency of education and research has not been arrested but is getting more severe, thus killing innovative spirit and capability. While there have been remarkable advancement in education and research during the past decade, quantity has been emphasized instead of quality.</p> <p>6. Environmental problems have not been ameliorated; instead, pollution is getting more and more severe. Rugged manner of development has resulted in sacrificing environment as the price to pay for economic growth. During the past decade, huge number of high-energy-consuming, high-pollution projects have caused severe damage and comprehensive deterioration to homes and living environment, leading to acute decline in quality of life and to even threat to life itself from pollution. In addition, environmental</p>

Table 1 (continued)

Achievements	Problems
<p>elements is directly related to the people's livelihood. It is also a requirement for improving income distribution, ameliorating disparity between rich and poor, promoting economic development and building a domestic-demand-led society. Over the past decade, while economic construction remained the core of policy implementation, social construction has also achieved remarkable advancement, such as the abolition of agricultural tax, remitting of school fee and miscellaneous fees at school, establishing compulsory education, canceling price hike of medicines, as well as the setting up of a social security system which, though still being low-level, is comprehensive in coverage, hence leading to very substantial improvement in people's livelihood.</p> <p>6. There has been rapid development in the process of urbanization. Urbanization not only has practical economic implications for China, but it is also a main guarantee for the nation's economic growth in the next two decades. Besides, urbanization will also transform people's mentality and way of life and its influence in this context is truly immeasurable. Hence, a major content of China's transformation is that from farming civilization to industrial civilization, from farming villages to cities, and this has to be accomplished through urbanization. During the past 10 years, urbanization has been advancing</p>	<p>problem-induced contradictions and conflicts have been on the rise and are becoming more and more acute.</p> <p>7. Inability to build up a stable energy resource supply system. With a developmental pattern of high energy resource consumption, a country of such low energy resource per capita would need to be heavily dependent on external sources of supply. Without building up stable and diversified channels of energy resource supply during the past decade, and having taken only a rudimentary step to explore new energy resources, the country will be constrained externally which will in turn affect its overall development.</p> <p>8. Collapse of social moral institution, ideological bankruptcy, continued dropping of moral bottomline, while personal profit becomes the target of all. Accompanying outstanding economic development during the past decade is the comprehensive moral decline, with the collapse of the old moral institution, bankruptcy of the ideology built up during the revolutionary era, while a new, modern moral institution for adaptation to the demands of the market economy and commercial civilization is yet to be built up and the construction of a convincing mainstream value system remains non-existent.</p> <p>9. Haphazard and <i>weiwēn</i> 维稳 style of diplomacy lacks holistic perspective, grand strategy and concrete train of thought. During the past decade, principles and objectives are not accompanied by strategic planning and agenda setting and will to implement. Constrained by the <i>tao guang yang hui</i> 韬光养晦 principle of</p>

Table 1 (continued)

Achievements	Problems
<p>at a speed of more than a percentage point per year, with more and more peasants being bound into the radiance of market and urban civilization, resulting in the rate of urbanization surpassing 50 per cent for the first time, thus accomplishing China's from-rural-to-urban transformation.</p> <p>7. Proposing ideas and stances on international order; unprecedented strengthening of international status and influence. As a natural outward projection of the country's composite strength and development results during the decade, China's international status and influence have experienced further strengthening and diffusion over the period. The introduction of the concept of the "China model", the discussion over the "G2" framework, and the elevation of China's power and the strengthening of China's voice in international organizations can all be seen as manifestation of its rising international status. At the same time, as a newly rising great nation, it needs to have its own opinions and stances about the international order. In this regard, China has proposed the developmental concept of a harmonious world and been working hard towards it, making itself a major force in pursuing international peace and development and upholding international justice.</p>	<p>"lying low and biding time", the government's haphazard and <i>weiwen</i> mode of thought in dealing with a whole series of international disputes has led to increasingly grim international environment for China.</p> <p>10. Weak promotion of political reform and democratization – still a huge distance towards the aspiration of returning power to the people. This is the most important issue for China today. Exactly because of its being most important, solving the problem is also particularly difficult. Looking at the experiences of other countries' modernization and China's own situation, to go straight in one step to promote relatively thorough political reform and democratization is impossible, and returning power to the people requires a procedure that asks for careful planning and installation. However, the ruling CCP should at least give the people hope and show its good faith and sincerity with some concrete actions, instead of dragging its feet just because there are problems. During the past decade, although Hu/Wen has also been emphasizing on democracy, freedom, rule of law, and on advancing political institutional reforms, the real progress has been limited and promoting of democracy has been weak. In fact, the solutions to all the abovementioned problems ultimately boil down to the issue of political reform and stand or fall by the depth of political reform. Hence, the ruling CCP should show its courage by walking the first step of political reform and democratization.</p>

Nevertheless, it would not be from a balanced perspective if all these aberrations and inhuman consequences from GDPism are blamed on State-business collusion and corruption, and the local governments' *weiwen* overdrive. After all, many cash-trapped and debt-ridden local governments might have no choice but to heavily rely on developmental projects for their revenues⁹ in this vast polity said to be the world's most economically decentralized country¹⁰ where the centre expects relative self-sufficiency of the local economy whether at the provincial level or the county level and the local governments are expected to be fully responsible for the launching and coordination of local reform, for local economic development, and for legislation and law enforcement within their respective jurisdictions. Putting such context together with the country's acute interlocal and interregional economic disparity, it will not be surprising to see inhuman forced demolitions becoming the rule of the day to make way for lucrative property development, or even manufacturing and mining ventures with little regard for human lives, labour rights and environmental consequences. Under such circumstances, these State actions of course unavoidably need to be coercive, leading to protests and resistance from the affected masses, which in turn lead to more repression in the name of *weiwen* including beatings, lock-ups and even murders, in the harsh environment of a legal system hostile and harmful not only to the rights defense movement but also the rights defense lawyers:

There are notorious "evil laws" against lawyers on the books, in particular against those perceived to be rights defence lawyers. In the Criminal Procedure Law, there are discriminatory provisions imposing onerous limitations on lawyers in meeting with their clients, accessing evidence, and investigating facts. The Criminal Law includes broad and vague provisions about "state secrets" that have been cited to prevent lawyers from investigating and obtaining a whole range of evidence. Most notorious is Article 306 of the Criminal Law with regards to "fabricating evidence", which makes lawyers' position disturbingly precarious and has been arbitrarily used to charge hundreds of lawyers in general and convict many high profile rights defence lawyers in particular.

(Feng, Hawes and Gu, 2012: 330)

In an eye-catching article "Zhongguo Zhenzheng de Tiaozhan zai Nali" [Where lie China's real challenges?] by Yuan Peng, director of the Institute of American Studies at China's Academy of Contemporary International Relations, published on 31st July 2012 in the overseas edition of the *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*), rights-defending lawyers (*weiquan lüshi*), dissidents, underground religious groups (supposed to refer mainly to the illegal Catholic and Protestant churches outside the government-sanctioned "patriotic churches"), disadvantaged groups and leaders of the netizens are grouped as the five types of people acting as the channels through which the United States is infiltrating China's grassroots to bring about change from bottom up.¹¹ Besides the timing of the appearance of the article – just prior to CCP's 18th National Congress – the accusative warning brought back memory of Mao's "five black types" (landlords, wealthy peasants, antirevolutionaries, bad elements and rightists) during the Cultural Revolution and hence the article's five categories are referred to by some readers as the "new five black types". The accusation is ominous, and placing civil rights lawyers at the top of the list could be a warning that State repression would be intensified upon those in the legal profession who dare to defend in court those dissidents that the State is going after or to take up civil rights cases against the routine State persecution in the name of *weiwen* and *hexie*. On the other hand, grouping together the different strands of dissent as targets to suppress also reflects a certain degree of concern over the potential threat posed to the one-party State by a better coalescence of these different

strands of dissent to form a common front in the pursuit of some transplanted “velvet” or “jasmine” revolution.

Indeed, miraculous economic performance and urban modernization accompanied by uncontrolled widening socioeconomic inequalities and the lack of rule of law (and often “lawless” local governments especially in the cases of the suppression of local civil rights activists and demolition of residential houses to make way for lucrative property development) have characterized the past three decades of Chinese development during the market-reform era. The problem is often blamed on Deng Xiaoping’s maxim “let some people get rich first” directive and the rugged capitalist approach to economic reform. However, as argued by Dirlik and Prazniak (2012), the issue at hand is bigger than just the misconduct of the local cadres or the nature of the political system:

[...] the most widespread causes of discontent – forceful expropriation of agricultural land, widespread dislocation of the population, severe exploitation of labour, social and spatial inequalities, corruption from the top to the bottom of the political structure, urban and rural pollution – are all entangled in the development policies that the PRC has pursued since the 1980s in its quest of “wealth and power” within the context of a neo-liberal global capitalism [...] The conversion of land into capital, the creation of a floating labour force available for this process, and the sale of cheap labour power to fuel an export-oriented economy are all aspects of capital accumulation within a globalized capitalist economy. If anything distinguishes the PRC, it is the presence of a sprawling organizational structure put in place by the revolution that has guaranteed the efficient performance of these processes, with coercion whenever necessary.

(Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 295)

Besides, begging the question as to the glory of China’s success in the past decade is the apparent failure in establishing the rule of law under the Hu-Wen administration. The factors at work here could in fact be similar to the reasons why North Korea is so resistant to economic reform (Kim, 2012), for establishing a comprehensive framework of the rule of law could eventually harm the self-declared legitimacy of one-Party rule, jeopardize the *wenwen* efforts, and destabilize the sociopolitical status quo that GDPism has so far succeeded to maintain. An example, besides “evil laws” and other hostile institutional arrangements” mentioned earlier, is “the naked violence of the State Security Division of the police, political police specialized in the suppression of political enemies of the Party[, who] are given extra-legal powers to keep their targets under round-the-clock surveillance, and even engage in kidnapping and physical assault on their targets, some of whom include rights defense lawyers” (Feng, Hawes and Gu, 2012: 331):

Many rights defence lawyers have become victims of these “evil laws” and hostile institutional arrangements. More often than not, the cases represented by rights defence lawyers are those sensitive cases avoided by ordinary lawyers and it is almost impossible for the rights defence lawyers and their clients to win the cases of this nature. Worse still, many defence lawyers representing those sensitive cases have been turned into defendants themselves by the state procurators on the charges fabricating evidence, leaking state secrets or inciting subversion of state power [...] And in the most recent government pre-emptive strike on Middle Eastern-style protests in connection with an online call to gather in public places – the so-called Jasmine Spring of 2011 – rights lawyers have again become major targets of intimidation and abuse.

(*ibid.*)

Zhang Wei, a senior research fellow at University of Nottingham's China Policy Institute, in a recent interview by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC), rejected the popular claim that the Hu-Wen administration was responsible for the past decade of China's unprecedented economic growth which he attributed instead to the economic reforms arduously engineered by earlier leaders in the 1980s and 1990s whose cumulative benefits were being reaped by the present administration. On the contrary, the Hu-Wen administration were characterized in the past decade by its lack of any substantial reforms in economic or political institution, as well as by the most draconian State control of society including the worst repression on civil rights activists and press freedom since the 1980s, which as Dirlik and Prazniak observe, combined to contribute to the complication of the overall problem of repression and dissent in the PRC:

Despite state pretensions to legality, the "crimes" for which intellectuals such as Ai Weiwei, Chen Guangcheng and Liu Xiaobo have been harassed, condemned, incarcerated and tortured (sometimes to death, as in the recent case of Li Wangyang) do not go beyond testing the limits of restrictive laws and even greater restrictiveness in their application. Restrictions on speech supposedly guaranteed by the PRC's own constitution are routine practice. Unemployed peasant workers are employed by the authorities to provide round-the-clock surveillance of victims whose only crime is to transgress against what the authorities deem the limits of speech or to pursue justice in the courts. The Party does not hesitate to resort to thuggery in order to enforce arbitrary restrictions. It is little wonder that the internal security budget of the PRC is larger than its defense budget.

(Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 288)

Far from being comparable with earlier leaders like Deng Xiaoping or even Jiang Zemin and Zhu Rongji in terms of reform efforts, according to Zhang Wei, the Hu-Wen administration are directly responsible for the acute social contradictions resulted especially from spiraling income and wealth disparities.¹² This would not come as a surprise, as Dirlik and Prazniak remind us "that most of the criticism directed against the PRC for its 'socialist' failures overlooks the fundamental national interest that guides the Communist regime's domestic and foreign policies, including the repressive exploitation of its own population in the name of development and security." (*ibid.*: 293)

3. Poverty Reduction and Rising Inequality

Even while the overall proportion of population in poverty dropped impressively from 30.7 per cent in 1978 to 3.4 per cent in 2000, according to government statistics, income inequality was increasing, with the Gini coefficient reaching 0.415 in 1995 and continuing to rise (Chai *et al.*, 2004: 2). At his first press conference in 2003 as China's premier, Wen Jiabao summarized the coming headaches in his new post in a group of figures, including China's labour force of 740 million *vis-à-vis* the Western advanced countries' total of just 430 million, and China's annual additional labour force of 10 million, *xiagang* and unemployed figure of about 14 million, and the rural-to-urban migrant labour of about 120 million – all giving rise to the huge employment pressure the country was facing (Liu, 2010). In terms of poverty and stratification, Wen pointed out that there were 900 million peasants among the country's total population of 1.3 billion, with about 30 million still being trapped in poverty – and the latter figure was derived based on annual income per capita of 625

yuan¹³ which was in fact too low a poverty line: if the line were to be more accurately placed at 825 yuan, the rural poverty population would be about 900 million. In terms of interregional disparity, Wen pointed out that the GDP of the 5 or 6 provinces in eastern, coastal China had exceeded 50 per cent of the national total GDP (*ibid.*).

Hence, while China's reforms have been successful in giving many people higher incomes and producing more goods and services, they also led to increasingly acute inequality in income and wealth among the populace. From one of the most egalitarian societies in the 1970s, China has turned into one of the most unequal countries in the region and even among developing countries in general. Bert Hoffman of the World Bank noted in 2006 that China's Gini had risen from 0.25 – equal to that of Germany – in 1980 to about 0.45 today, as the country becomes less equal than Russia or the USA. Yan (2010), on the other hand, gave a “conservative” Gini estimate of 0.475 for the year 2007. In the 1980s the richest 10 per cent of the people of China earned 7 times the income of the poorest 10 per cent, today they earn more than 18 times as much.¹⁴ Or as another observer put it, “Ever since the early years of reforms, the divide between the rich and the poor had been emerging, and it is now getting to the stage of ripping the entire society apart.” (Zhou, 2006: 286).

Similarly, Yan (2010) gave a high Gini for all China as early as in 1994 at above 0.43, which had risen to a “conservative” estimate of 0.475 in 2007, which is of course a far cry from the Gini of below 0.3 (averages of 0.16 and 0.22 for urban and rural areas respectively) before the economic reforms. This alarmingly high Gini of 0.475 in 2007 represented a growth of 135 per cent from 1978, over a 29-year period in which GDP per capita (at constant prices) had grown by almost 10 times over the pre-reform level with an average annual growth rate of 8.6 per cent. Yan (2010: 176-177) divided this growth of inequality into four phases:

- the “relatively egalitarian” (by international standard) period of 1978-1984 with Gini between 0.2 and 0.3 and little urban-rural disparity, while the rural economy developed immensely under the full force of reform;
- the “relatively justifiable” period of 1985-1992 with Gini hovering between 0.3 and 0.4 while the whole economy was expanding vibrantly with the emphasis of reform shifted to the cities since 1984, though the accompanying inflation and expansion of the income gap had begun to overshoot people's psychological expectation threshold, resulting in rather serious social instability;
- the worrying period of 1993-2000 of yearly increasing Gini index, with increasingly rapid reform and marketization pushing Gini over the international alarming line of 0.4 in 1993, and further over 0.43 in 1994, before the coefficient dropped back below 0.4 in 1995 and 1996 but rose again with increasing urban-rural, employment, intercommunal and inter-stratum differentiation amidst the intensifying marketization and growth of the private-sector economy following the 15th National Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)¹⁵;
- the high interest polarization period since 2001 to the present wherein the globalization of China's growing economy and the wealth effect of the capital market have led to the continuous expansion of the income gap, with Gini reaching 0.475 in 2007, even by “conservative” estimation.

Yan (2010: 177-178) further pointed out that China's rural Gini has always been higher than the urban, implying that the intra-rural income disparity is fueling the expansion of the national income disparity, while the urban-rural income disparity is almost the main

cause of the continuous expansion of the national income gap. In fact, the 20 per cent urban highest income group's income is shown to be 5.5 times the income of the 20 per cent urban lowest income group whereas the 20 per cent rural highest income group's income is 7.3 times the income of the 20 per cent rural lowest income group.¹⁶ Besides urban-rural, such widening of income and wealth disparity is also manifest in various other aspects (Table 2). Yan's analysis shows further that changes in national Gini is positively related to changes in urban-rural income ratio, and concludes that China's present Gini coefficient has reached a stage of too big a disparity and could be even higher if various informal incomes of the middle stratum and upper stratum are included in the calculation, even allowing for some scholars' view that China's Gini could be permitted to be higher, e.g. at 0.45, a line that had almost been reached as early as in 2001.

Table 2 China's Income and Wealth Disparity: Results of Various Surveys and Estimations

Data source	Item	Highest income/greatest wealth	Lowest income/least wealth	Note
Chinese Academy of Social Sciences	Proportion of wealth in family wealth per capita	Highest 20% residents having 72.41%	Lowest 20% residents having 1.35%	Gini coefficient = 0.6865
	Proportion of residential house estate in family wealth per capita	Eastern region: 81.4% Non-agricultural households: 80.7% Urban households: 82.0%	Western region: 66.5% Agricultural households: 69.6% Rural households: 72.1%	Sample volume = 5118
China's Renmin (People's) Bank	Proportion of household average saving deposits in urban renminbi deposits	Largest (household average) 20% households having 64.4%	Smallest (household average) 20% households having 1.3%	Local currency deposits: differential = 49.5
	Proportion of household average saving deposits in urban foreign currency deposits	Largest 20% households having 88.1%	Smallest 20% households having 0.3%	Foreign currency deposits: differential = 293.7
National Bureau of Statistics	Urban-rural income ratio	About 40% of urban residents getting near 70%	About 60% of rural residents getting near 30%	Income differential = 2.33 times
	High-low income groups' income ratio	20% high-income group getting 40% income	80% middle- and lower-income group getting 60% income	Income proportion of high-income group getting larger

Source: Yan (2010: 180), Table 4-1.

In terms of income ranking, the social stratum that is rising fastest since the beginning of the "reform and open" policy is that of the private entrepreneurs, followed by managers, State and social administrators, skilled professionals, and business and industry *getihu*¹⁷ (Table 3). The inter-stratum income gap has indeed been expanding with the differential between the highest average monthly income stratum (that of the State and social administrators up to 1980 and that of the private enterprise owners after 1980) and lowest income stratum (always been that of the agricultural labourers) spiraling from 3.8:1 during the 1971-1980 period (52.8 yuan) to 19.9:1 by 2005 (754.4 yuan) (Table 4).

Table 3 China: Ranking of Ten Major Social Strata by Average Monthly Income

Period Stratum	Before 1971	1971- 1980	1981- 1990	1991- 1999	2000- 2001	2005	Overall ranking	Overall ranking of last four periods
State and social administrative stratum (2.1%)	1	1	4	3	3	4	3	3
Managerial stratum (1.6%)	3	2	3	4	2	2	2	2
Private enterprise owner stratum (1.0%)	—	—	1	1	1	1	1	1
Professional skilled stratum (4.6%)	2	3	6	5	4	5	4	5
Officer stratum (7.2%)	6	7	8	6	6	3	7	6
Individually-owned business & industry (<i>getihu</i>) stratum (7.1%)	7	6	2	2	5	6	5	4
Commercial- and service-sector personnel stratum (11.2%)	4	4	5	7	7	8	6	7
Worker stratum (17.5%)	5	5	7	8	8	7	8	8
Agricultural labourer stratum (42.9%)	8	8	10	10	10	10	10	10
Urban and rural vagrant, unemployed and semi-unemployed stratum (4.8%)	9	9	9	9	9	9	9	9

Source: Yan (2010: 186), Table 4-4; stratum's present proportion in brackets from Li and Chen (2004: 13), Figure 1-3.

Table 4 China: Average Monthly Income of Ten Major Social Strata and Differential

	Before 1971	1971-1980	1981-1990	1991-1999	2000-2001	2005
Mean value of the strata's average monthly incomes	42	52.8	145.3	465.3	641.1	754.4
Income differential between highest and lowest stratum	2.7	3.8	13.8	21.7	19.4	19.9

Source: Yan (2010: 179), Figure 4-3.

4. Public Protests and Social Crisis

Poverty and inequality are among the key factors underlying social disturbances. Various estimates have shown an increase in collective protest incidents from 8,700 in 1994 to 90,000 in 2006 and further to 127,000 in 2008.¹⁸ According to official statistics, “illegal” *quntixing shijian* (or *qunti shijian*, literally “mass incidents”) nationwide increased from 10,000 to 74,000 cases over the decade of 1994-2004, with an average annual growth rate of 22.2 per cent, while the number of people involved in the *qunti shijian* went up from 730,000 to 3,760,000, with an average annual growth rate of 17.8 per cent (Hu, Hu and Wang, 2006). The figures continued to climb to 87,000 cases and about 4 million people by 2005 (Yeoh, 2010: 256, Figures 9 and 10). In general, the number of *qunti shijian* had been rising at an alarmingly increasing rate. From a growth of about 10 per cent from 1995 to 1996, *qunti shijian* was growing at an average annual rate of as high as 25.5 per cent from 1997 to 2004, i.e. higher than the average growth rate of 22.2 per cent during the decade of 1994-2004, with annual growth in certain years reaching as high as above 40 per cent; or with 1994 figure indexed 100, a steep increase of the index from 100 to 740 in terms of the number of cases during the decade of 1994-2004 (an increase of 6.4 times) and from 100 to 515 in terms of the number of people involved (an increase of 4.2 times) (*ibid.*).

4.1. Nature and Types of Public Protests

In terms of the participants’ profiles, while at the beginning the people involved in these “mass incidents” were mainly *xiagang* workers¹⁹ and peasants (reflecting land loss and corruption issues) but later on the list of participants expanded to include, besides *xiagang* workers and peasants who lost their lands, also workers, urban residents, private individual enterprise owners (*getihu*), teachers, students and a small number of ex-servicemen and cadres, etc. (Hu, Hu, He and Guo, 2009: 143; Yeoh, 2010: 257, Figure 11), thus reflecting expanding and deepening popular interest conflicts and contradictions. The changing and expanding class structure is not only a society-wide phenomenon but also occurring within the particular social class itself, thus making the grievances of the class-within-class even more acute. Such is the inevitable consequence of a lopsided development which while having created an urban middle class evident of developmental success and managed successfully to feed the country’s huge population, with “the second largest economy in the world, the PRC nevertheless ranks among the world’s poorest countries in terms of per capita GDP” and with most of the wealth being “concentrated in the hands of the top 20 per cent of the population, but especially the top one per cent [while the] rural population which is still the majority languishes as agriculture is commercialized, with increasing participation from agribusiness” (Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 297). Regarding the last point, Donaldson and Zhang gives a incisive classification of China’s farmers today into five categories based on their role as direct producers and their class relations with the agribusinesses – “commercial farmers” who work independently on allocated family land; “contract farmers” who work on allocated family land to fulfill company contracts, whose harvests are sold to the contracting companies, and while being dominated by the companies manage to retain some flexibility; “semi-proletarian farmers with Chinese characteristics”, mainly hired villagers who work on collective land rented to companies as company employees, whose harvests belong to the

company, and while being dominated by the companies manage to enjoy a degree of entitlement; “semi-proletarian farm workers”, mainly hired migrant labourers who work on company land as company employees, whose harvests belong to the companies, and while being dominated by the companies do have family land at home as a fall-back option; and “proletarian farm workers”, mainly hired landless labourers who work on company land as employees, whose harvests belong to the companies, and who, unlike the other four categories, suffer from complete domination by the companies (Donaldson and Zhang, 2009: 99, Table 6.1). On the other hand, on the urban front,

[...] the population is being crammed into “megacities” beset with problems of pollution, traffic, and the yet unpredictable toll on the population of life under such circumstances. The working population is still subject to abuse at the hands of domestic and foreign corporations. Workers fight back, needless to say, and the second generation of peasant-workers are less amenable to exploitation and prejudice than their parents. Much of the repressive apparatus of the state is directed to keeping under control, with violence if necessary, protests against inequality, exploitation, unjust plunder of public resources, rights to land in particular, and environmental pollution. State terrorism against these protests includes incarceration, torture and outright murder of their leaders, with similar treatment meted out to intellectuals and lawyers who throw in their lot with popular protests.

(Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 297)

On the other hand, Tong and Lei (2010) documented a total of 248 “large-scale mass incidents” (those with more than 500 participants, according to China’s Ministry of Public Security)²⁰ from 2003 to 2009 (Table 5). While large-scale mass incidents come in various types, labour and land/relocation disputes top the list (Figure 2), followed by social disturbances and riots usually triggered by isolated incidents but reflecting the people’s long-simmering distrust of local government officials with accusation of corruption and government-business collusion (*guan-shang goujie*): the well-known cases being the Weng’an incident of 2008, Shishou incident of 2009 and the recent riots in mid-June 2011 involving thousands in Taizhou, Zhejiang Province, in a series of latest large-scale riots that also included the disturbances in Guangdong Province’s Chaozhou, Zhejiang Province’s Shaoxing, Hubei Province’s Lichuan and Xintang township of Zengcheng City (of the metropolis of Guangzhou, Guangdong Province).²¹ It is undeniable that underlying these large-scale public protests is the issue of rapidly growing economic inequality in the forms of widening income gap, lack of social safety net and perception of social and government injustice, as Tong and Lei commented, “[...] local governments and police force were generally perceived as corrupt and incompetent. The fact that the police force were often dispatched in favour of the capitalists who have close relationship with the government whenever there was a dispute between peasants and the companies reinforced the public perception. There was a profound distrust of the government.” (Tong and Lei, 2010: 498) Such social disturbances and riots with no specific economic demands are seen as the most system-threatening because they are challenging rather than endorsing regime legitimacy:

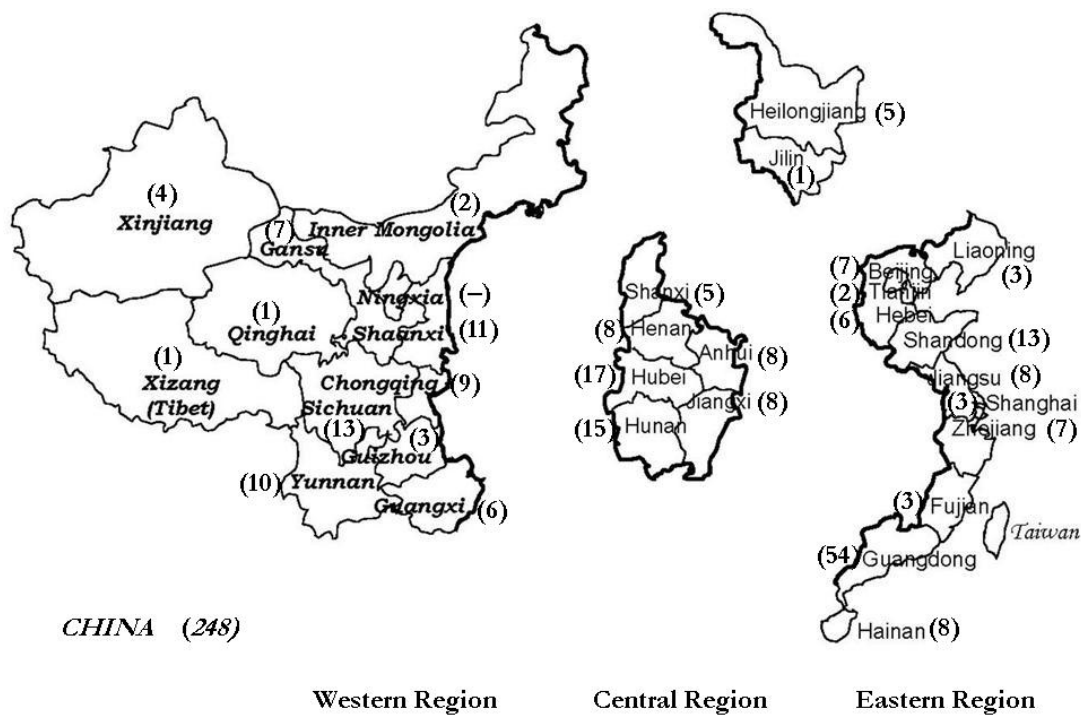
The outburst of disturbances is often the product of broad and diffused social grievances over a variety of issues ranging from inequality, corruption and social injustice to increasing drug addiction. Disturbance is often triggered by poor local governance, especially the misconduct of *chengguan* [i.e. staff members of the city management agency] or the police. In these cases, social anger, not economic demands, is directed at the authorities.

(Tong and Lei, 2010: 501)

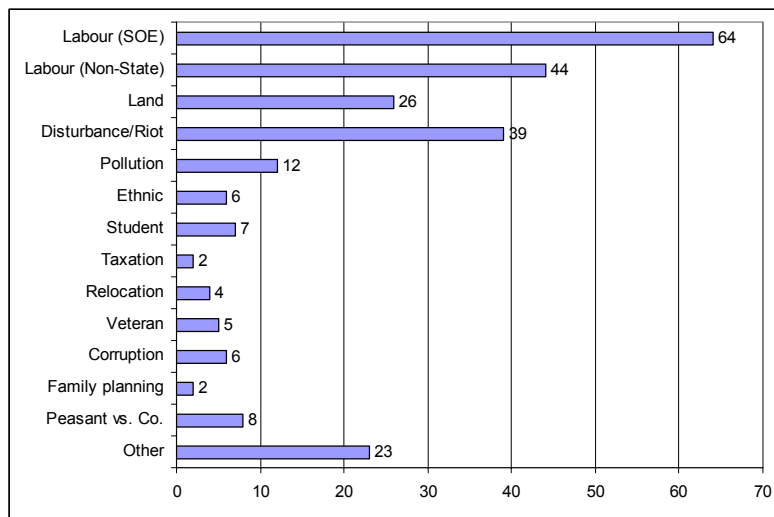
Table 5 China: Large-scale Mass Incidents, 2003-2009

Year	Total Number of Large-scale Mass Incidents
2003	9
2004	20
2005	9
2006	25
2007	63
2008	76
2009	46

Source: Tong and Lei (2010: 489), Figure 1.

Figure 1 China: Frequency of Large-scale Mass Incidents by Province, 2003-2009

Source: Tong and Lei (2010: 490), Table 1.

Figure 2 Large-scale Mass Incidents by Type (Total Number during 2003-2009)

Source: Tong and Lei (2010: 491), Table 2.

4.2. Distrust of Political Authority

The frequency and scale of the recent riots has undeniably been increasingly alarming to the government, giving rise to the allegation that the Xintang authorities were under the direct secret order of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party to fabricate the image of the mid-June 2011 Xintang riots as purely clashes between the Sichuan migrant workers and the local Cantonese, even by enlisting the underworld to orchestrate attacks, in order to transform the protests against the government into inter-communal conflicts and to justify the suppression of public protests and demonstrations. On the other hand, the government media *Renmin Ribao* (*People's Daily*) has blamed the riots on cultural clash between migrant workers and the local people, while some scholars have attributed the recent Guangdong riots to the recession of an open economy, and the lack of security in the livelihood of the twenty million migrant workers in the province who are also suffering from discrimination and being bullied and harassed by the local underworld and other powers that be, and most fundamentally, the intriguing relationship between the Communist Party-State which continues to represent and embody the interest of the working class and the real working-class masses:

Possibly most fundamental in terms of the number of lives it touches and the structural inequalities it expresses is the disturbed relationship of the Party-state to the working, especially the agrarian working population. An urban vision against the earlier Maoist glorification of the peasantry and practical necessities of capital accumulation have combined in a development policy that owes much of its success to dispossession of the agrarian population and the exploitation of agrarian labour driven off agriculture – the so-called “peasant-workers” (*nongmingong*). The exploitation of agrarian resources and labour was severe under Mao’s leadership as well, but this time around the returns have been plundered by the ruling elite, mostly from the Party or with Party connections, that has produced one of the most unequal societies in the world. Conflicts over illegal or unjust confiscations of land by local cadres are at the source of the majority of the

disturbances that numbered close to 200,000 [in 2011]. Villages have been emptied out of their young men and women, leaving behind the elderly and the very young, severely affecting family structures. The 150-200 million estimated migrant population of workers not only are treated like “illegal” migrants in being deprived of access to city amenities (including education and health), but are also a source of friction among the population because of ethnic and place differences. Depending upon the constitution of the migrant workers at any one place, gender and ethnic tensions are added to the class oppression and exploitation that has been a motor force of the PRC’s development over the last two decades. With rare exceptions such as the Wukan Uprising in Guangdong in 2011, the Party-State responds to expressions of popular unrest with further suppression and, when necessary, violence.

(Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 289)

On the other hand, Beijing sociologist Yu Jianrong pointed to the alarming fact that the recent spate of social disturbances (see Table 6)²², e.g. in Lizhou (Hubei) and Inner Mongolia, were triggered by “sudden events/emergencies” (*tufa shijian*) and their participants were mostly unrelated to the original cause and without clear interest demands.²³ However, in venting their discontent towards society, the absence of “free-floating aggression” is notable (in contrast with, e.g., the recent summer riots across British cities in August 2011), and the government and State authorities have been the main targets of attack. Widespread support has even been noted on the Internet for such attacks on government offices and even in the case of the killing of judges. During the spate of wanton killings of primary school and kindergarten children that shocked the nation in 2010, the sudden outbreak of fatal free-floating aggression against these young children across China that occurred from March to May 2010 which caused the death of a total of 17 people, including 15 children, and injured more than 80, in a string of five major attacks and four other cases that occurred from 23rd March to 12th May (including those that killed 8 and injured 5 in Fujian province, killed 2 and injured 5 in Guangxi, injured 19 in Guangdong, injured 32 in Jiangsu, injured 5 in Shandong and killed 9 in Shaanxi), and another attack on 3rd August that killed 4 and injured more than 20 at a kindergarten in Shandong (Yeoh, 2010: 247), an ironic banner allegedly appeared at the gate of a kindergarten which read: “*Yuan You Tou Zhai You Zhu, Qianmian You Zhuan Shi Zhengfu*” [there’s a real culprit responsible for any wrong or any debt; take a right turn in front you’ll find the government (offices)]. While this can be interpreted as a sarcastic advice to re-direct the free-floating aggression towards the real target of social grievances, the alleged State orchestration of the perception of Xintang disturbances as a clash between the migrant workers and local people would be tantamount to an attempt in re-channelling the anti-State sentiments into inter-communal scapegoating.²⁴ Stemming from profound distrust of the government, as Tong and Lei (2010) observed above, such social disturbances and riots with no specific economic demands are the most system-threatening as they are challenging rather than endorsing regime legitimacy.

While admittedly not all forms of social protests are seen as system-threatening and ironically some that at first look seem to be system-threatening may instead work for the ruling regime’s advantage (Yeoh, 2011: 439-444, 481-483), the intensification of public protests all over the country (e.g. 19 incidents of public protest just within three days from 17th to 19th October 2012²⁵) has served to demonstrate the level of despair in facing the onslaught of oppressive State-business collusion in the name of economic miracle and national glory so lauded by the upper classes and co-opted intelligentsia both domestic and among the Overseas Chinese communities, with similar accusation by death still spreading

among the Tibetans in the ethnic Tibetan regions of China unceasingly in protecting against similar oppression. While such problems are well understood by the central government, there does not seem to be any way out of the quagmire that is trapping at least over 620,000 villages all over China, according to a *New York Times* analysis²⁶, where rapidly rising land prices are encouraging both village cadres and higher-tier officials to abuse public office to engage in rent-seeking activities at the expense of the villagers in a gargantuan, complex nexus of interest entanglement, both horizontal and vertical. At the same time, the village committee elections system, so lauded by many observers as a bold step of grassroots democratization, has ironically worsened official corruption and “backdoor” practices for such village elections are seldom really free or fair, and independent candidates unendorsed by the Party are continuously being blocked from standing, harassed or even brutalized, while the election process is being easily manipulated.

Table 6 Spate of Social Disturbances in May-June 2011

Beginning date of riot	Place	Details
3rd May	Shehong County, Sichuan Province	After a secondary school teacher was mistaken as a murderer and beaten up by plain-cloth policemen, over a thousand people including teachers and students demonstrated and destroyed the police station and county government office.
13th May	Tianzhu County, Gansu Province	A dismissed employee threw petrol bomb and injured over 60 people.
23rd May	Inner Mongolia	Death of a herdsman after being hit by a coal truck led to demonstrations.
26th May	Fuzhou City, Jiangxi Province	A <i>shangfang</i> petitioner detonated bombs at three places including the city attorney’s office, killing 3 and injuring 9.
6th June	Chaozhou City, Guangdong Province	On 1st June, a 19-year-old Sichuan migrant worker Xiong Hanjiang asking for unpaid wages of 2,000 yuan was assaulted and had his hand and leg muscles severed, leading to a 10000-people riot, with 18 injured. The badly injured Xiong had recovered in the hospital but could be handicapped for life.
8th June	Shaoxing City, Zhejiang Province	Seven thousand workers and villagers demonstrated against a tin foil factory that had been polluting the place for many years.
9th June	Lichuan County, Hubei Province	After former anti-corruption office director Ran Jianxin died during interrogation, over a thousand people who believed he was beaten to death walked on the streets and clashed with police.
10th June	Xintang Township, Guangdong Province	A pregnant Sichuan woman and her husband who were roadside peddlars were beaten up by security personnel who were allegedly extorting protection money from the couple, leading to a riot by over a thousand Sichuan migrant workers who destroyed the government office and police vehicles, reportedly with 5 people killed, over a hundred injured and hundreds arrested. There are five million Sichuan migrant workers in Guangdong, of whom a hundred thousand are in Xintang.

12th June	Zhengzhou City, Henan Province	Over 400 residents of Waliu Village of Shifo Township demonstrated against the government over forced relocation and unfair compensation, after unidentified thugs beat up villagers protecting their homes.
13th June	Changsha City, Hunan Province	Over 500 residents demonstrated against the government over forced relocation.
14th June	Loudi City, Hunan Province	Residents demonstrated against the building of a 220,000-volt cable tower; many injured.
15th June	Taizhou City, Zhejiang Province	Believing that the village official of the Jiaojiang District had been embezzling land acquisition subsidies over the past nine years, thousands of villagers besieged and destroyed Sinopec's petrol station.

4.3. Socioeconomic Transformation, Political Actions and the Social Order

It should be noted that many issues of high social concern such as land requisition and relocation²⁷ (which has particularly attracted attention in various *dingzihu*²⁸ cases), wage, employment, housing and accommodation, environment and food hygiene and safety are closely linked in this country to the issue of corruption and government-business collusion (*guan-shang goujie*, here referring to the collusion between local government officials and businessmen or entrepreneurs in return for favours) and contribute to widespread popular resentment and constitute the source of most public protests – officially labeled *quntixing shijian* or *qunti shijian*, literally “mass incidents” which take various forms “from peaceful small-group petitions and sit-ins to marches and rallies, labor strikes, merchant strikes, student demonstrations, ethnic unrest, and even armed fighting and riots” (Tanner, 2004: 138) – often against the police and the local governments.

After the crackdown on the massive 1989 demonstrations which actually began with smaller-scale anti-corruption protests, this root cause of the protests has gone worse, not better. Citing Sun Yan in *Current History* (2005), Hutton (2006: 127) reminded us that “large-scale corruption is mounting. The average ‘take’ in the 1980s was \$5000; now it is over \$250,000. The number of arrests of senior cadre members above the county level quadrupled between 1992 and 2001 [...] In 2005 it was disclosed that a cool \$1 billion had been misappropriated or embezzled in Gansu, one of China’s poorest provinces, by a ring of forty or more officials.” Hutton cited Hu’s (2006) estimate that the annual economic loss due to corruption over the late 1990s alone amounted to between 13.3 and 16.9 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), while evidence provided by government departments revealed that the annual economic loss between 1999 and 2001 due to corruption averaged 14.5 to 14.9 per cent of GDP.²⁹ As Hutton (2006: 127) noted, “Every incident of corruption – smuggling, embezzlement, theft, swindling, bribery – arises in the first place from the unchallengeable power of communist officials and the lack of any reliable, independent system of accountability and scrutiny [...] the evidence of the depth of corruption at the apex of government, business and finance, mean that any paradoxical usefulness [of corruption in the early years of reform in providing flexibility to an otherwise highly bureaucratic system] has long since been surpassed. Corruption to this extent is chronically dysfunctional and even threatens the integrity of the state.” This threat to the integrity of the State is most evident in the worrying frequency of incidents of social unrest which mostly stem from protests against local official corruption and abuse of power, including the local governments’ suppression of

*weiquan-shangfang*³⁰. For instance, in 2005 alone, such public order disturbances amounted to 87,000 cases, or an average of almost 240 a day, involving about 4 million people³¹. While social unrest among farmers and workers has long been observed since the early 1990s, as Lum (2006: "Summary") described, "recent protest activities have been broader in scope, larger in average size, greater in frequency, and more brash than those of a decade ago":

According to Chinese Communist Party sources, social unrest has grown by nearly 50% in the past two years, culminating in a particularly violent episode in December 2005. China's Public Security Ministry declared that there were 87,000 cases of "public order disturbance" – including protests, demonstrations, picketing, and group petitioning – in 2005 compared to 74,000 reported cases in 2004. In 2003, the PRC government reported more than 58,000 "major incidents of social unrest" involving an estimated 3 million to 10 million persons, of which 700, or less than 2%, involved clashes with police, while a Hong Kong-based labor rights group estimated that the number of labor demonstrations reached 300,000 that year. The December 2005 clash between villagers and People's Armed Police (PAP) in Dongzhou village (Shanwei city), southeastern Guangdong province, in which 3-20 villagers were killed, became a symbol of the depth of anger of those with grievances and the unpredictability of the outcomes of social disputes.

(Lum, 2006: 1-2)

Figure 3 is a stylized presentation based on Zhao (2008) which shows different forms and levels of political action as a function of the degree of organization, of institutionalization/routinization and of targeted changes. The forms and manifestations might be different – from large-scale demonstrations of 1989 to the sporadic but frequent eruption of, often violent, public protests nowadays, including ethnoregional riots – but they all share a basic underlying element that the power that be might not be willing to recognize:

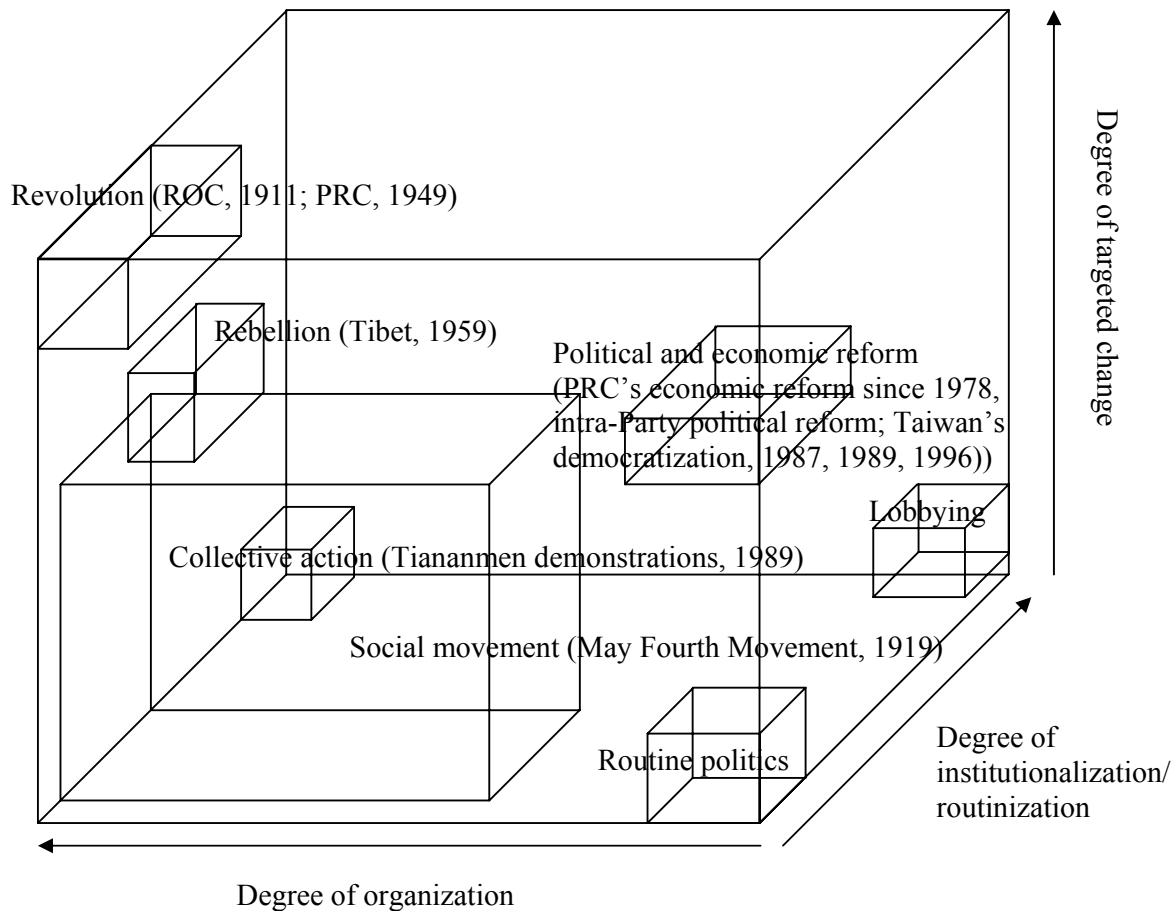
In any social order [...] there is always a strong element of dissension about the distribution of power and values. Hence [...] any institutional system is never fully homogeneous in the sense of being fully accepted or accepted to the same degree by all those participating in it [...] Thus "antisystems" may develop within any society. Although the antisystems often remain latent for long periods of time, they may also constitute, under propitious conditions, important foci of systematic change. The existence of such potential antisystems is evident in the existence in all societies of themes and orientations of protest.

(Eisenstadt, 1992: 417)

According to official statistics, "illegal" *qunti shijian* nationwide increased from 10,000 to 74,000 cases over the decade of 1994-2004, with an average annual growth rate of 22.2 per cent, while the number of people involved in the *qunti shijian* went up from 730,000 to 3,760,000, with an average annual growth rate of 17.8 per cent (Hu, Hu and Wang, 2006). The figures continued to climb to 87,000 cases and about 4 million people by 2005 (Figures 4 and 5). In general, the number of *qunti shijian* had been rising at an alarmingly increasing rate. From a growth of about 10 per cent from 1995 to 1996, *qunti shijian* was growing at an average annual rate of as high as 25.5 per cent from 1997 to 2004, i.e. higher than the average growth rate of 22.2 per cent during the decade of 1994-2004, with annual growth in certain years reaching as high as above 40 per cent; or with 1994 figure indexed 100, a steep increase of the index from 100 to 740 in terms of the number of cases during the decade of 1994-2004 (an increase of 6.4 times) and from 100 to 515 in terms of the number of people involved (an increase of 4.2 times) (*ibid.*). In terms of participants' profiles, while at the beginning the people involved in these "mass incidents" were mainly *xiagang* workers and peasants

(reflecting land loss and corruption issues) but later on the list of participants expanded to include, besides *xiagang* workers³² and peasants who lost their lands, also workers, urban residents, private individual enterprise owners (*getihu*), teachers, students and a small number of ex-servicemen and cadres, etc. (Hu, Hu, He and Guo, 2009: 143), thus reflecting expanding and deepening popular interest conflicts and contradictions.

Figure 3 China: Typology of Political Actions



Source: Based on Zhao (2008: 767), Figure 26-1.

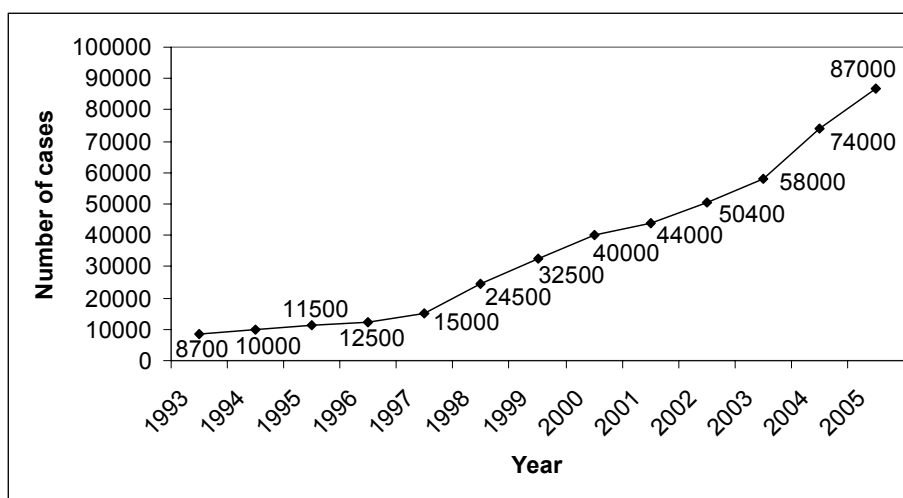
More recent cases of such public order disturbance were alarmingly on the rise in a series of serious incidents including year 2008's high-profile conflicts of 28th June (in Guizhou), 5th July (Shaanxi), 10th July (Zhejiang), 17th July (Guangdong) and 19th July (Yunnan). Yet these constitute but just a small sample of the overall rise in social unrest across China in recent years, some of which involved ethnic conflicts³³. Adding to these are the long-running Tibet conflicts including the March 2008 Lhasa riots and the March 2009 conflict in Qinghai's Guoluo Tibetan *zizhizhou* ("autonomous prefecture")³⁴, as well as the July 2009 Ürümqi riots. With the memory of the 1989 tragedy constantly hanging like the

sword of Damocles, the ruling regime is again facing a dire dilemma, as described by Tanner (2004):

[...] the struggle to control unrest will force Beijing's leaders to face riskier dilemmas than at any time since the 1989 Tiananmen Square demonstrations. Experiments with less violent police tactics, economic concessions to demonstrators, and more fundamental institutional reforms all risk further encouraging protest in an increasingly restive society. Nevertheless, these challenges must be navigated if the party wants to avoid the ultimate dilemma of once again resorting to 1989-style violence or reluctantly engaging in a more fundamental renegotiation of power relations between the state and society.

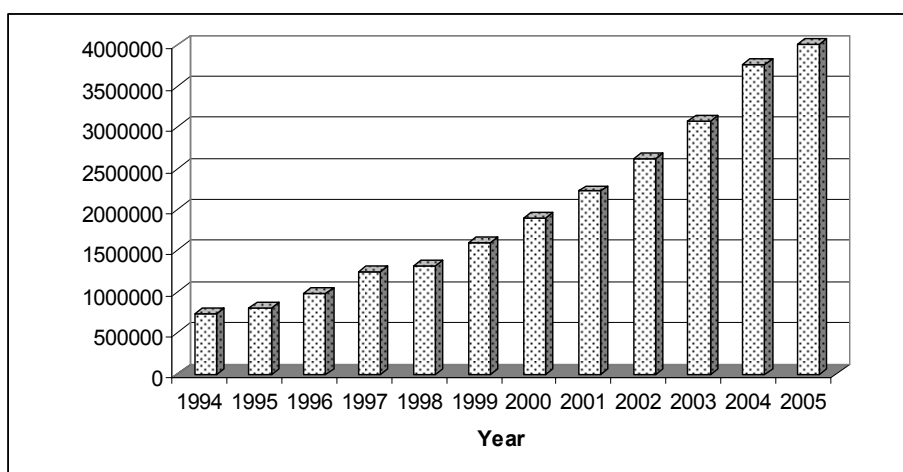
(Tanner, 2004: 138)

Figure 4 China: Incidents of Public Protest (*Qunti Shijian*)

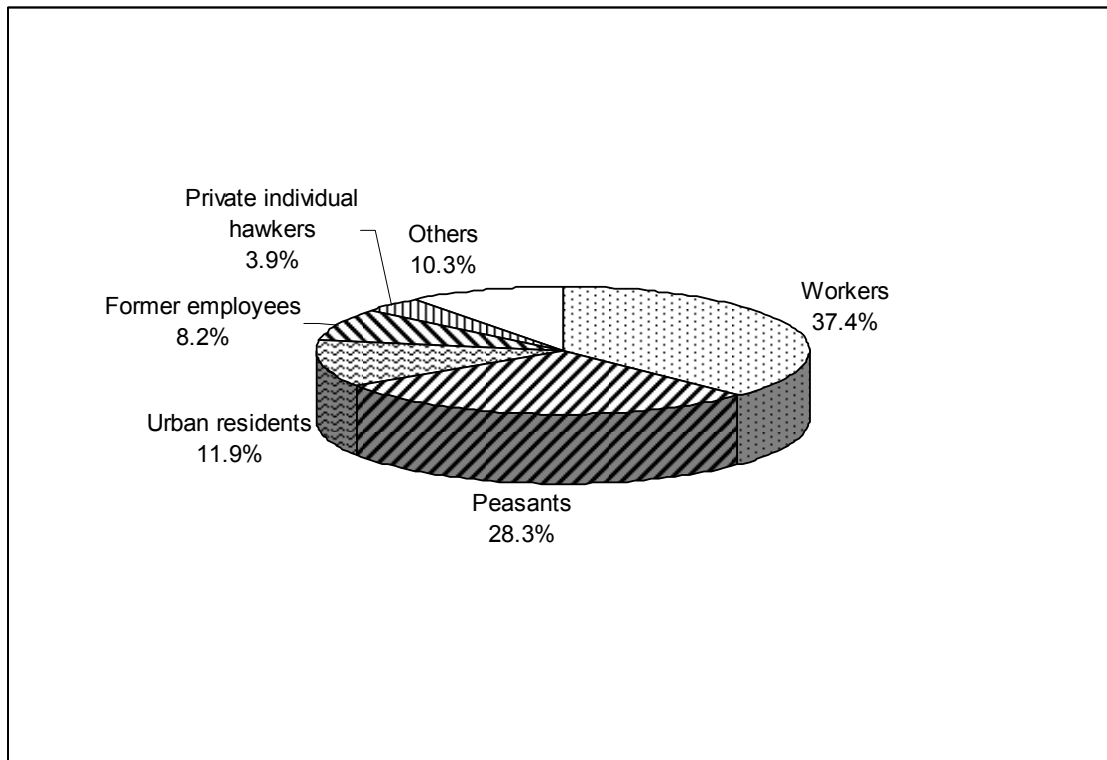


Source: Lum, 2006: 1-2; Tanner (2005), cited in Keidel (2005: 1), Table 1, data from *Liaowang* magazine and China Ministry of Public Security; Hu, Hu and Wang (2006).

Figure 5 China: Numbers of People Involved in Public Protests (*Qunti Shijian*)



Source: Hu, Hu and Wang (2006).

Figure 6 China: Participants of “Mass Incidents” (*Qunti Shijian*)

Note: Among “Workers”, one-third are workers of SOEs. “Others” includes a small number of ex-servicemen, teachers, students, cadres etc.

Source: Hu, Hu, He and Guo (2009: 143), Figure 3.2 (with data of 2001).

The ruling CCP has not been oblivious to this deteriorating situation. Anti-corruption measures have continued to constitute a main prong in the Party’s political reform since the Jiang Zemin administration, as Jiang himself declared in 2002 in his last political report to the National Congress, “If we do not crack down on corruption, the flesh-and-blood ties between the party and the people will suffer a lot and the party will be in danger of losing its ruling position, or possibly heading for self-destruction.”³⁵ Having averted such a dire scenario for the Party in 1989 via a bloody crackdown, CCP was in full awareness of the root cause of the Tiananmen protests. The predominantly Chinese squeaky clean, efficient tiny state of Singapore – and her long-ruling People’s Action Party (PAP) – has quite incongruently become a role model for the CCP to emulate.³⁶ To the Western accusation that China’s so-called “political reform” is nothing but a ruse since political reform in an authoritarian state should mean democratization and that China is copying a bad Singaporean model to develop its own version of neo-authoritarianism, combining free market economy with dissent-muzzling one-party rule, China’s answer usually goes along the line like the West should recognize China’s specific national conditions and give due respect before China could reach the Western standards in human rights and democracy. Whether the neo-authoritarian experience of the corruption-free tiny city state of Singapore could effectively be emulated by

a huge country with one-fifth of humanity where corruption is endemic³⁷ has always been a centre of debate, given the fact that China's growing social unrest indeed reflects deep institutional problems of the evolving local State corporatism after 1989, as Minzner (2006) observed:

Particularly at local levels of government, control over all formal political and legal institutions is centralized in the hands of the local Party secretary and a few deputies. These individuals exercise extensive control over institutions such as local legislatures, courts, Party disciplinary committees, and the media. This concentrated power in the hands of a few individuals breeds numerous problems. First, it allows corruption to thrive. Second, it allows local leaders to choke off the flow of information to higher-level leaders regarding policy failures that might reflect poorly on local officials' performance. Third, it deprives citizens of effective redress of their rights through local legal and political institutions, particularly when the source of the violation is a local Party official. Chinese citizens appear to be increasingly resorting to mass protests and petitions directed at higher-level authorities as a means of circumventing the controls of local officials over legal and political institutions, and triggering the intervention of higher level officials in resolving their grievances.

(Minzner, 2006: 9)

While the CCP regime has in the post-1989 era led the country to economic miracle and hence, in the eyes of many, has successfully reasserted its legitimacy,³⁸ this reassertion of legitimacy and unassailability has in reality not been immune to series of challenges, some rather severe and unexpected, since 1989. Underlying these are various thorny issues that emerged both in spite of and due to the astounding economic success, one of which being socioeconomic stratification as well as ethnoregional disparity that have gone from bad to worse over these years. It is in this overall atmosphere that, according to Dirlik and Prazniak, the real nature of the Chinese Communist Party-State on the one side and with it the so-called "China Model" of development, and the nature of political dissent on the other, should be understood:

The legacies of the revolution and Bolshevik structure of the Communist Party are no doubt important elements in structuring Chinese politics. On the other hand, it needs to be kept in mind that what might be a necessity of revolutionary politics aimed at social transformation can easily degenerate into garden variety dictatorship designed to protect organizational and class interests. PRC politics presently partakes of both these elements. Increasingly, however, legitimation is located not in the necessities of developing toward some socialist vision but national goals of "wealth and power" [...] Criticism that focuses on the legacies of revolution and socialism are misleading most egregiously in ignoring that it is nationalism, not socialism, that accounts for the behaviour of the regime. After all, the Chinese Revolution was a national revolution for autonomous development against "semi-colonialism", with socialism as its vehicle. The vehicle gave the nationalism its particular flavour, but with the retreat from any operative vision of socialism, the latter seems more than ever merely a front for the national pursuit of wealth and power – under the leadership of the Communist Party.

(Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 291-293)

5. Economic Inequality and Social Stratification

Mental illness, mental breakdown and suicides are among the most outstanding of indicators of the negative impact of social change. Indeed, shocking the nation was the spate of suicides and attempted suicides³⁹ at the Foxconn conglomerate's factory in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, that resulted in the death or injury of more than a dozen workers within the short span of about 4 months (from the first suicide on 23 January 2010 to end of May), which continued with the fatal thirteenth and fourteenth "jumps" at its factories in Foshan, Guangdong, and Kunshan, Jiangsu, respectively on 20th July and 4th August⁴⁰. Behind such heart-rending human tragedies lies increasingly acute socioeconomic inequality. The following account in a sense captures the essence of the problem:

China is a profoundly polarised society, with hundreds of millions of impoverished workers and peasants at one pole, and a tiny capitalist elite at the other. According to a Boston Consulting Group study, China had 250,000 millionaire households in 2005, ranking the country sixth in the world. These households accounted for only 0.4 percent of the total, but controlled 70 percent of national wealth.

(Chan, 2007)

In addition, it was also alleged that almost 60 per cent of public revenue was used for the benefit of the 70 million-strong community of CCP cadres and apparatchiks who enjoyed a level of welfare – including healthcare, education and career opportunities – greatly higher than the ordinary citizens, and among the rich with wealth worth a hundred million yuan and above, 91 per cent or 2932 were the children of high-ranking CCP cadres and apparatchiks, possessing assets above 2.045 trillion yuan.⁴¹

The fact that 70 per cent of China's wealth was in the hand of 0.4 per cent of the people was confirmed by Cai Jiming, a Chinese People's Political Consultative Committee member, on the 6th Meeting of the 11th Standing Committee of the CPPCC, referring to an authoritative government department report.⁴² Cai emphasized that with 0.4 per cent of the people in control of 70 per cent of wealth, China's wealth concentration was higher than that of the US. Proposing income tax and inheritance tax reforms, Cai emphasized that such wealth concentration in the hands of a minority of people has led to inadequate consumption and even distorted consumption. Such wealth concentration attests to contemporary China as

[...] an outstanding example of the private appropriation of public resources that David Harvey has described as "accumulation by dispossession". The Party's claims to be *the public* has grown less con-vincing over the years with increasing evidence of the private disposal of the country's wealth through party control of the economy. The new Chinese economic elite working through or with the Party does not differ much from its counterparts elsewhere in the unprecedented accumulation of wealth in the hands of a small minority of the population. The "blood-line" faction which has received much attention recently in connection with the Bo Xilai affair, and the prospective Party Chairman, Xi Jinping, goes so far as to claim special privileges for descendants of revolutionary party leaders that smacks of a new aristocratic formation in the making.

(Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 297)

In fact, a recent report revealed that with luxury goods consumption reaching US\$8.6 billion, i.e. 25 per cent of the world market, China superseded US to become the world's second largest luxury goods market by January 2009, ranked only after Japan.⁴³ Other data

show that the degree of wealth concentration towards the rich in China is presently growing on average at an annual rate of 12.3 per cent which is double the world average growth rate. Such tendency is also reflected in sad state of the small and medium enterprises, with data showing the disappearance of 7,700,000 private businesses over the decade of 1994-2004 and the collapse of the middle class leading to an M-shape society.⁴⁴ Such is the inevitable social consequence of a “China Model” miracle of rapid development built on what a critic called “low human rights advantage”⁴⁵:

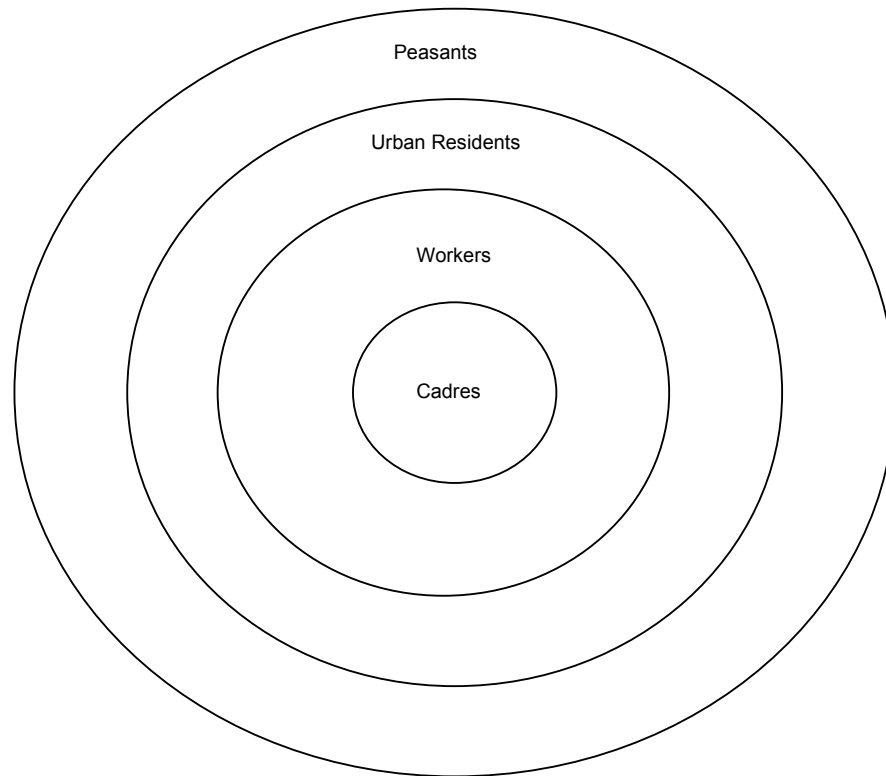
Despite the ideological and organizational particularities of the PRC that are products of its revolutionary history, the accumulation of capital over the last three decades have been marked by class formations and relationships characteristic of the “primitive accumulation” of capital elsewhere. The distinction of the regime, derivative of its claims to socialism, is almost total control of resources, including labour, which under this “workers’ state” is not allowed to represent itself because it is already represented by the “socialist” regime [...] Domestic accumulation has been achieved through the conversion of land into capital, in the process releasing huge amounts of cheap and controlled labour-power that then was put to use in the construction of cities, infrastructure projects, and industries. This labouring population also provided the workers and large numbers of women in export production financed by foreign and domestic capital that would make China into the “factory of the world”, and a major depository of global capital.

(*ibid.*: 296)

Regarding social stratification, Zhu (2007: 6-7) observed the existence in China of an enormous set of “identity circles” encompassing the whole society (Figure 7) – “agricultural population” circle, “urban residents” circle, “workers” circle, “cadres” circle⁴⁶:

- 1) Agricultural population: Those born into peasant families who have by informal procedure moved into other circles, even if having entered other classes or strata by work change or even having left the village the whole life, are still only considered peasants.
- 2) Urban residents: Broadly speaking, all non-peasants belong to this group of “urban residents”. Formerly, “urban residents” narrowly defined refer to unemployed personnel – those without a fixed job. As “urban people”, they had a status higher than peasants, but as people without work units, their status was below “workers”. If they were formally employed by the labour department, even if they did work, they were just “temporary workers”. This community of “temporary workers” no longer exists since the 1990s, but the concept is still alive in people’s subconsciousness.
- 3) Workers: All workers in accordance with whether they are managed by the government’s labour department or personnel department are divided into the “workers” and “cadres” sub-circles.
- 4) Cadres: From this sub-circle a further division can be made into “general cadres” and “leadership cadres”. Civil organizations in China, schools, and even public enterprises and their personnel are all subject to the so-called “administrative stratification”⁴⁷.

Members of the society are unable to completely follow their own will in moving across these four circles between which exist different economic and political conditions. Hence, between these four circles there exists a high-low relationship – in other words, this is not a multidimensional but a centripetal structure; moving towards the centre implies the raising of one’s social status.

Figure 7 China: Identity Circles

Source: Zhu (2007: 6), Figure 1-1.

Social stratification can indeed be traced back to the dawn of the Chinese civilization. From the Qin (Ch'in) Dynasty to the Qing (Ch'ing) Dynasty (221 BC – AD 1911), the imperial courts had always divided the Chinese populace into four strata – literati and officialdom (*shi*), agriculture (*nong*), labour/craftsmen (*gong*) and merchants/businessmen (*shang*), with both landlords and peasants included in the category of “nong” as the two major strata, followed by the two secondary strata of “gong” and “shang” (Table 7) – between which did exist a certain level of vertical mobility (Li, 2008b: 32-33).

Table 7 China: Official Social Stratification, 1880s

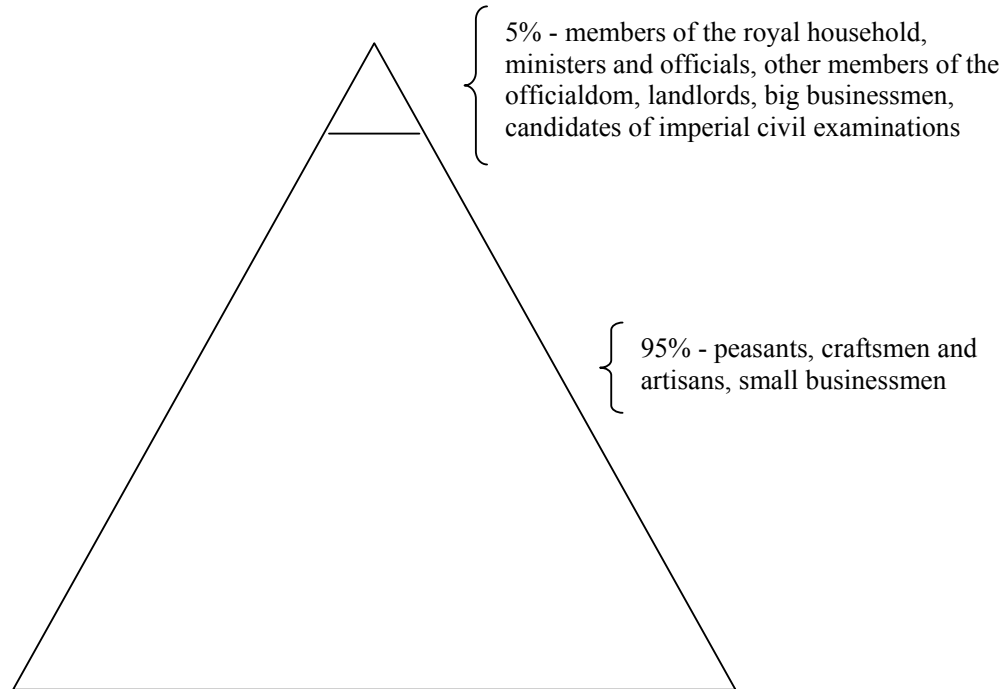
Class	Number of households	%
Literati and officialdom (<i>Shi</i>)	1,500,000	2
Agriculture (<i>Nong</i>)	56,000,000	80
Industry and commerce (<i>Gong shang</i>)	12,500,000	18
Total	70,000,000*	100

* Total population around 350-400 million.

Source: Li (2008b: 33), Table 2-2 (original source: Marsh, 1980: 15).

Nevertheless, the traditional official categorization contains its own contradictions by grouping together landlords and peasants under “nong” and the upper-class big businessmen/merchants and the lower-class petty businessmen together under “shang”, and separating officials and literati from the landlord class where they actually belong to (*ibid.*: 33). A clearer treatment of stratification is shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8 China: Social Stratification in Late Qing (Ch’ing) Dynasty



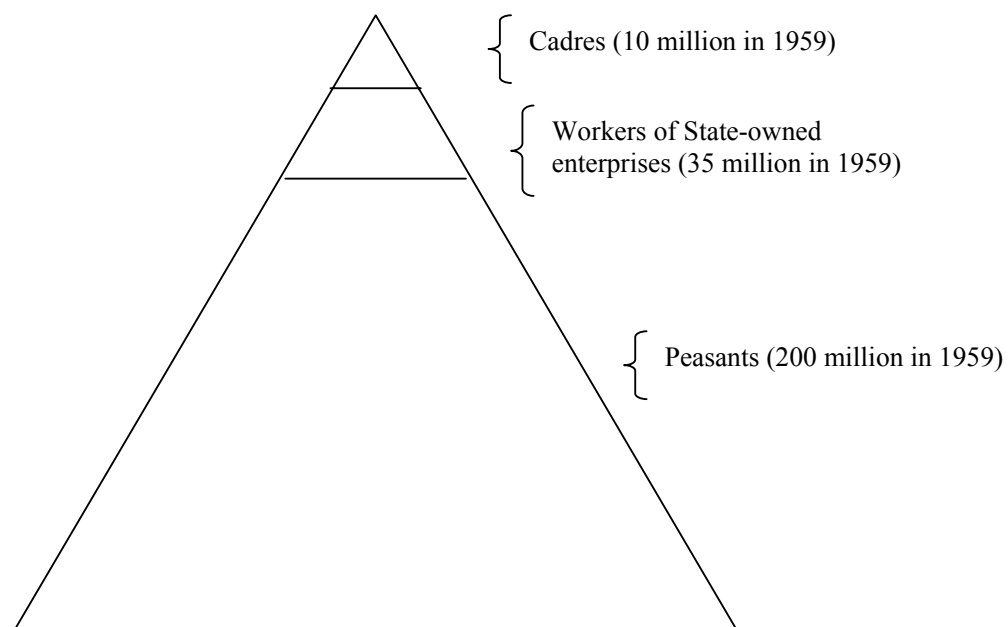
Source: Li (2008b: 33), Figure 2-1 (original source: *The Cambridge History of China*, Vol. 13, p. 30).

Tremendous transformation came with the Communist revolution, and by 1958 emerged a new structure of social stratification with the disappearance of the landlord class and the national bourgeoisie, and replacing them was the new upper class: the cadres – and as in the past, the huge peasant masses remained the country’s lower class (Li, 2008b: 50, see Figure 9). Moving into the 2000s Chinese social stratification has witnessed three major transformations – a third of the peasants are now the *nongmingong* (rural-to-urban migrant labour)⁴⁸ whose total number is almost equal to that of the urban workers; urban non-SOE workers have greatly surpassed the SOE workers in number as the number of SOE workers has declined rapidly after 1997; rapid increase in the number of China’s reborn bourgeoisie (*ibid.*: 176, see Figure 10). Disagreeing with the underestimated official 2003 figure of 7.73 million who were owners of private enterprises (see Figure 11), Li (2008b: 188) estimated the total number constituting the Chinese bourgeois class (though still represented a small segment between cadres and SOE workers) to be from 10 to 15 million, including four categories missed out in the official statistics: the large number of managerial personnel and local cadres who virtually turned into enterprise owners due to privatization of almost all

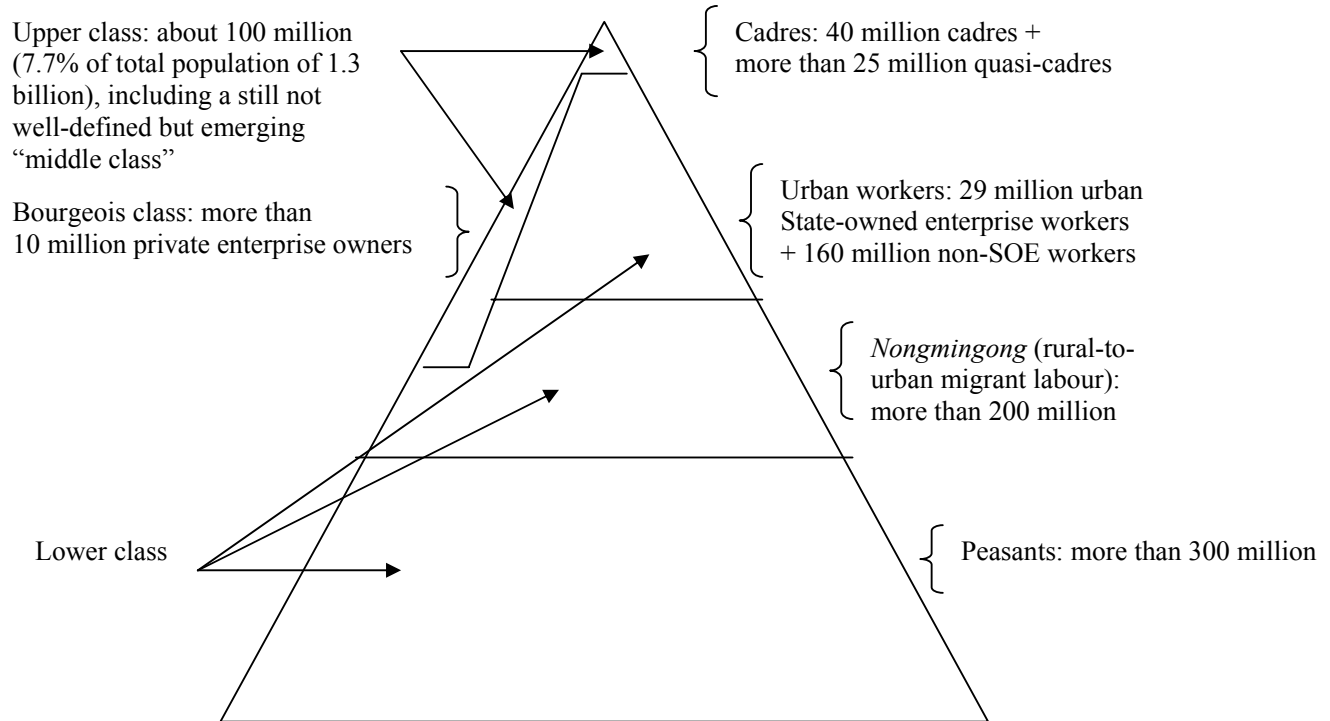
village and township enterprises within two to three years after 1998; the many cadres of the large number of small- and medium-scale SOEs and even a certain number of large SOEs which were privatized after 1997 who became the new owners of these enterprises; with the majority of large SOEs turning into joint-stock companies in the last decade, the large number of administrative personnel in these enterprises and some civil servants who were involved in regulating and administering the process of these SOEs turning into joint-stock companies had acquired huge volume of shares; unknown number of government officials who, having legally or illegally accumulated substantial volumes of wealth, invested the money in the share markets or saved it in local and overseas banks. Summing up the savings and interests, gains in stocks and shares and other non-salary incomes of these four categories of people would give amounts apparently higher than their wages and salaries (*ibid.*).

An interesting question is that regarding China's illusive "middle class". The approach in Li's model as shown in Figure 10 is, citing Gilbert (2003: 17), not to identify the Chinese "middle class" before China enters the stage of late industrialization or post-industrialization, as the majority of the Chinese white-collar service-sector professionals are part of the upper classes of the cadres and the reborn bourgeoisie. The speed with which this presently illusive class is going to emerge unequivocally in the changing class pyramid depends of course on the dynamics of social mobility in the long process of modern Chinese industrialization. The impacts of China's economic reform in the post-Mao period especially since the critical juncture of 1989 (a catalyst that led to Deng Xiaoping's reaffirmation of the path of reform in his *nanxun* in 1992) on social mobility have been tremendous, and their significance is outstanding especially in view of the barriers that existed just before the reforms began (Figure 12) – the *hukou/huji* system, administrative documentation system and political status (ideological) barrier.

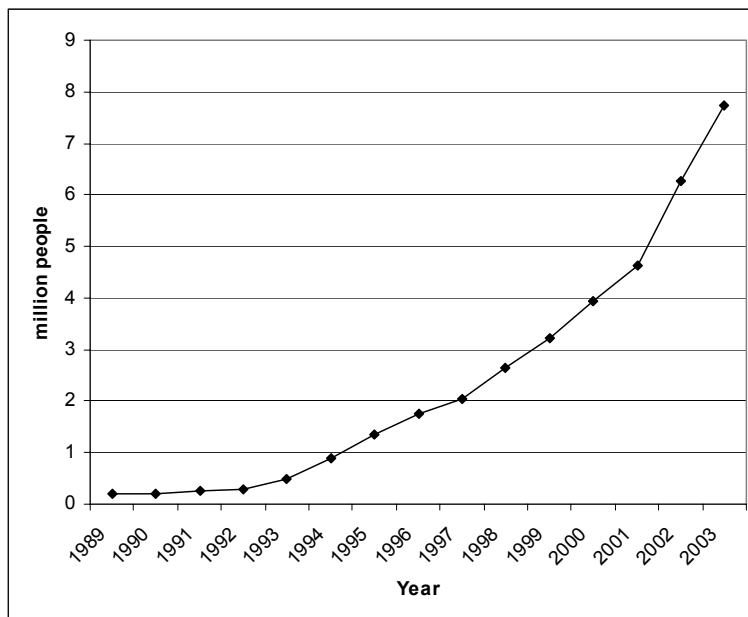
Figure 9 China: Social Stratification, 1959-1979



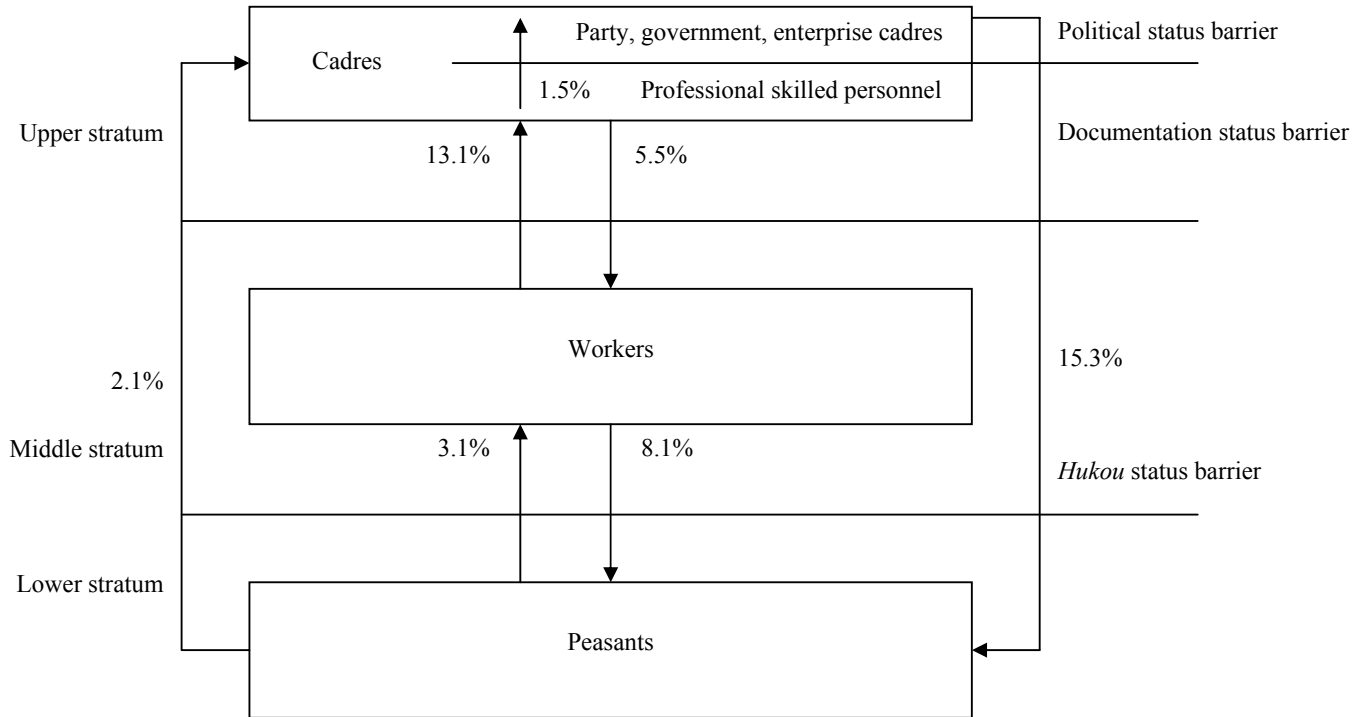
Source: Li (2008b: 51), Figure 3-1.

Figure 10 China: Social Stratification, Present

Source: Li (2008b: 176), Figure 8-1 and pp. 177-194.

Figure 11 China: Resurgence of Bourgeois Class since 1989

Source: Li (2008b: 187), Figure 8-3.

Figure 12 China: Channels of Social Mobility and Barriers before Economic Reform (Intragenerational Mobility)

Notes: Arrows represent the directions of mobility, percentages are rates of mobility.
 Source: Li (2008a: 497), Figure 17-1.

The *hukou* barrier is the most insurmountable, and only a slim 5.2 per cent of peasants managed to cross this barrier during the 1940-1979 period (compared to the 13.1 per cent of workers who managed to move up into the cadre stratum), with 3.1 per cent becoming workers and 2.1 per cent becoming cadres (Li, 2008a: 497). Within the cadre stratum, political (ideological loyalty) barrier had blocked professional skilled personnel (who were thus marginalized and unstable within the cadre community) from moving upward into the organizational/enterprise cadre community, with only a slim 1.5 per cent passed the severe political scrutiny to advance into the latter (*ibid.*: 498). On the other hand, during this pre-reform period there also existed downward mobility which could be explained by the temporary changing of status due to university enrolment and military service etc. as well as specific political policy changes and various political campaigns (*ibid.*: 498-499). All these manifestations of social mobility since economic reform began have resulted in the present overall structure of social stratification whose details could be illustrated as in Figure 13.

6. Domination and Assertion: Interpreting Chinese Sociopolitical Movements

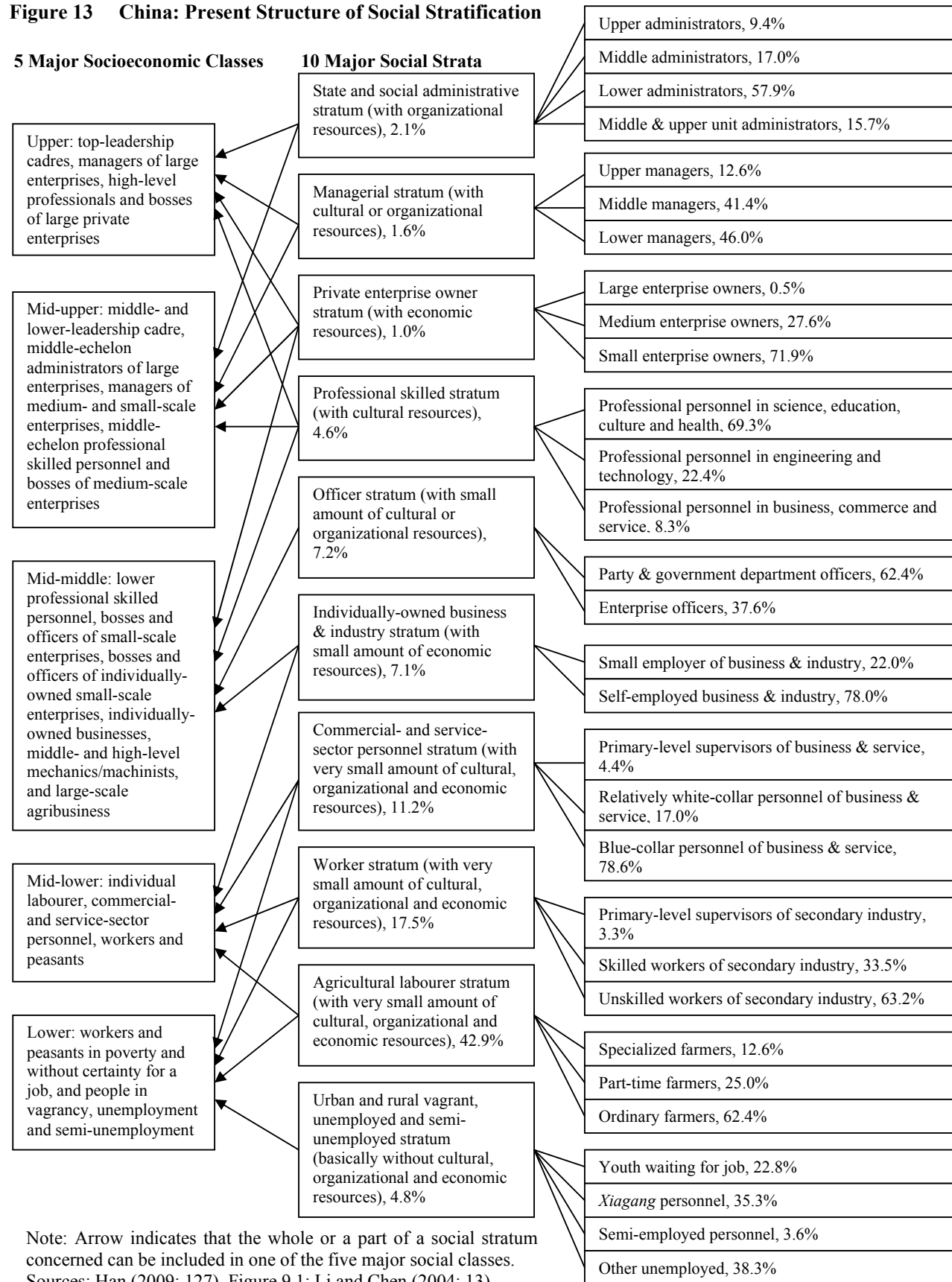
It is amidst such larger milieu of increasing economic inequality and social stratification which have bred acute social discontent and frequent and widespread public protest that contemporary China's State-civil societal relations need to be understood. Since the brutal crushing of the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations, Chinese political dissent has survived essentially on two tracks. On the one hand are the exiled dissidents and their various organizations mainly based in the United States that make up the Chinese democracy movement in exile in which many survivors of the 1989 crackdown are still active, on the other there are the rights-defending activists and civil society organizations inside China which are threading a thin line within China's spurious legal environment, fighting to right the social injustices caused by rampant corruption, State-business collusion, and the *weiwen* preoccupation that places stability above civil rights and political morality, while trying to avoid challenging CCP's political monopoly.

On the other hand, the reason that the Party-State may no longer opt to rule by just brute force like old-style dictators but choose to use more subtle forms of coercion beneath a coat of democratic trappings, including grassroots elections, modern free market, politically censored but otherwise free access to Internet and other social media and "evolving" rule of law, is simply that it has grown smarter with experience to realize that the old-style autocratic "thuggish repression" no longer works in this globalized Internet age, as William J. Dobson analyzes in his recent book *The Dictator's Learning Curve: Inside the Global Battle for Democracy* (2012).

Having evolved with the times into a much more public relations-savvy technocratic clique, operating by consensus at high levels while enhancing economic efficiency at the lower tiers of government, the modern Party-State thus presents a uniform face of a government that delivers to the citizens and the world to dissuade attempts to challenge or destabilize its political monopoly which is today, of course, no longer purely a matter of politics and governance, as the Party-State has grown into a complex nexus of politico-pecuniary interests, a gargantuan structure of interfeeding power, favour and lucre with simply too much to lose. In other words, the once ideal-driven Chinese Communist Party is today

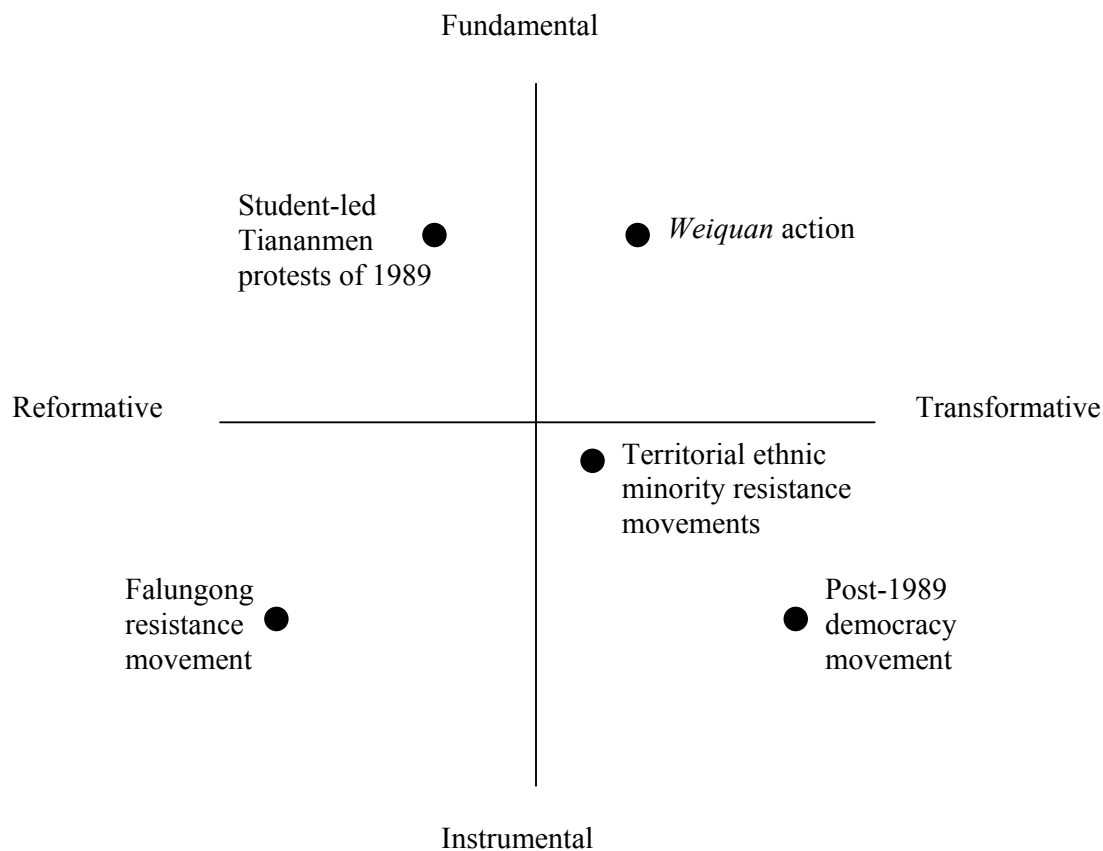
[...] no longer just a political but also an economic class which has a direct interest in the accumulation of capital. It has so far been more successful than its predecessors in the twentieth century in convincing the population that its interests are also the national interest, but how long it can do so is anybody's case. One of the particularities of the PRC is that the organizational apparatus that has enabled its development is equally efficient as an instrument of repression so long as it retains its coherence, which it has done successfully so far through the distribution of economic rewards and privileges throughout the organization. We should remember that the Communist Party and its auxiliary organizations make up around 20 per cent of the population.

(Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 297-298)

Figure 13 China: Present Structure of Social Stratification

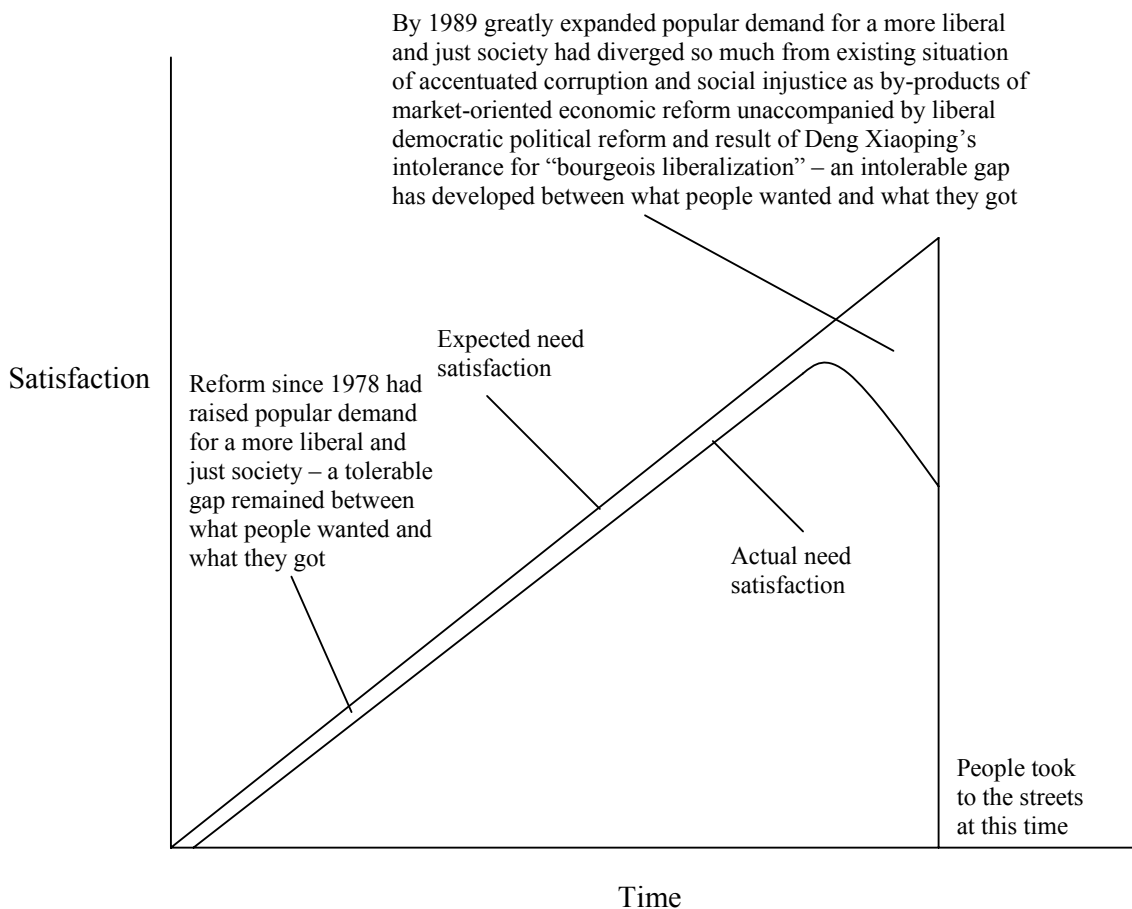
How exactly does the civil society respond in such a political milieu? Figure 14 shows a matrix of Chinese nonviolent action (NVA) movements. On the horizontal axis is the strategic dimension, or the “tactical-strategic” dimension of Weber and Burrowes’s typology of NVA, which indicates “the depth of analysis, the ultimate aim and the operational time-frame which activists use” (Weber and Burrowes, 1991). In the context of contemporary China, along this strategic spectrum could be found protesters in 1989’s student-led demonstrations and members of today’s Falungong resistance movement who represent the more “reformative” (or “tactical” in Weber and Burrowes’s terminology) exponents of NVA in terms of their assertive orientation, and who resort to short- to medium-term campaigns in pursuing a particular goal within an existing social framework, setting their eyes on reform, but not revolution. Protesters in 1989’s student-led demonstrations were not revolutionaries aiming to overthrow the CCP as in the interpretation of the hardliners in convincing Deng Xiaoping to order the bloody crackdown, but common people from all walks of life voicing their demands for rectifying mainly corruption-related social injustices, as understood by the conscientious Zhao Ziyang who objected to but failed to avert the violent suppression – an unavoidable social development over the first decade of market reform that culminated in an intolerable gap between what the masses got (*vis-à-vis* the élite) and what they really wanted, as portrayed in Figure 15.

Figure 14 Matrix of Chinese NVA



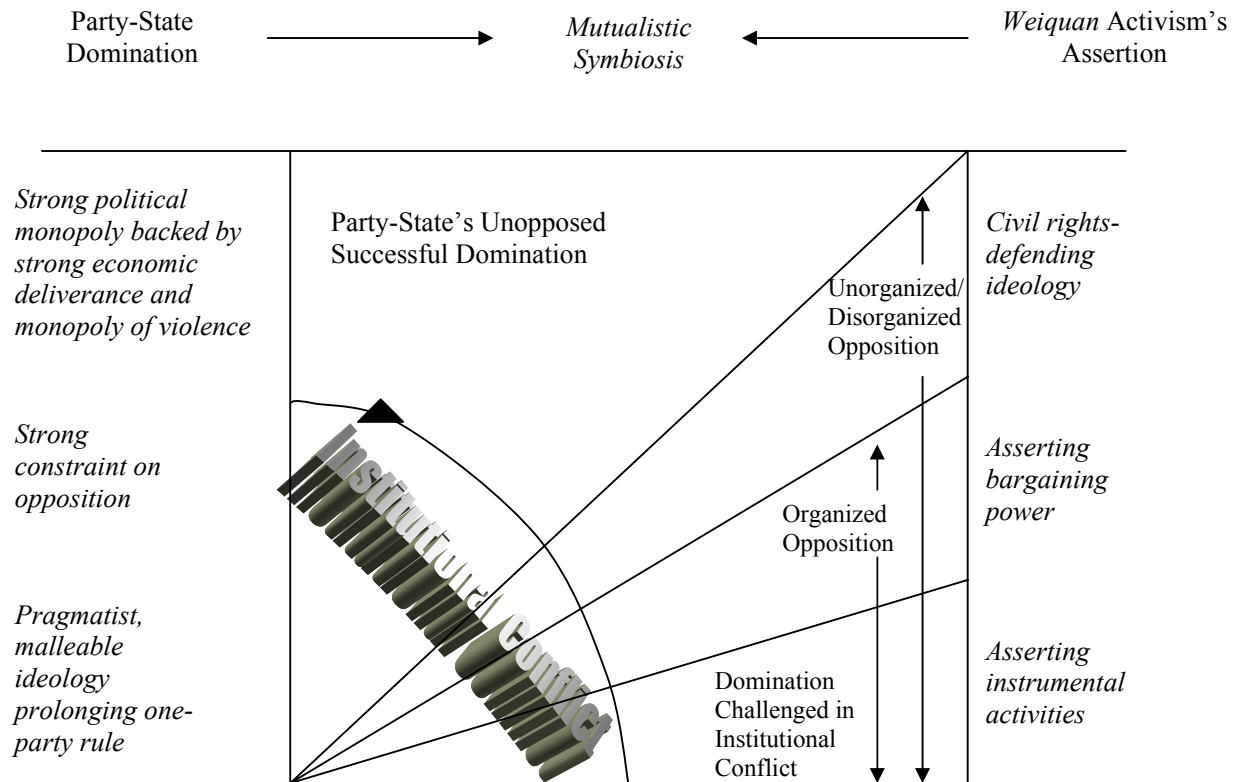
For instance, the post-1989 pro-democracy dissidents, whether domestically based or in exile, and probably to a lesser extent the rights-defending (*weiquan*) activists, whether single-issue or cross-issue advocates, fall in terms of their assertive orientation more towards the “transformative” (or “strategic” in Weber and Burrowes’s terminology) pole, as they are being guided more by a “structural analysis of social relationships”, with their main concern being about the fundamental transformation of society and hence their particular campaigns being conducted within the context of a long-term revolutionary strategy (Weber and Burrowes, 1991). The *weiquan* activists can be seen slightly less “transformative” than those in the democracy movement, for unlike the latter, the *weiquan* activists are often compelled to advocate a regime change towards multiparty liberal democracy simply as a result of the disillusionment with a Party-State which is too repressive and unaccommodating. With a less repressive leadership which is more caring in responding to their demands, these *weiquan* activists or at least some of them would probably choose to retreat further from the “transformative” pole, and instead of pressing for multiparty liberal democracy, would accept extensive reform of the Party-State as an alternative.

Figure 15 China: Expanding Demand for Political Institutional Change, 1978-1989



Source: Base on Davies’s J-Curve Theory of Revolution; see Vander Zanden (1988: 584), Figure 21.2 (adapted from Davies, 1962: 6, Figure 1).

“It is not an accident that former Premier Wen Jiabao once called himself ‘grandpa Wen’ – *Wen yeye* – in front of the people”, noted Hung (2011). In a sense, the role of Wen, long cultivated as the loving grand patriarch who is at every scene of disaster to offer moral care for his “children”, is orchestrated to be an on-site projection of the central Party-State as the modern successor of the caring benevolent emperor who was always there to *zuozhu* (do justice) for his downtrodden subjects and punish his abusive officials, in a system that survives till today in the form of *shangfang* (travelling to the capital for petitioning) by the abused people suffering in the hands of corrupt local officials. Such an image is crucial to the survival of the Party-State, as any self-seeking dynasty-builder has long been acquainted with, for the mandate of heaven would be lost if that image is shattered – ever since Mencius (Meng Zi) emphasized two thousand three hundred years ago the people’s satisfaction as an indicator of a ruler’s moral right to power, and justified the overthrow of an unworthy ruler⁴⁹. Just imagine if Wen Jiabao does have the power and leverage within the Party-State to translate his caring image into a force that would turn the Party-State into a less repressive, more benevolent political monopoly, giving due consideration to contemporary China’s tortured history as well as her potential for breaking up, it probably would not be too far-fetched to think that most of the *weiquan* activists whose advocacy is increasingly converging with the wider democracy movement might move further back from the “transformative” pole and be content with intra-Party-State institutional reform rather than revolutionary regime shift to multiparty electoral democracy. It is a fact that even under the present repressive atmosphere, most of the *weiquan* activists are careful to show that they are protesting *to* rather than *against* the central CCP government by limiting their demand for redressing civil grievances to single issues and localizing the targets of their protests, and justifying their actions by appealing to the written laws and constitution of the People’s Republic. Immediately after the escape from his two-year house arrest in Shandong, the blind civil rights lawyer Chen Guangcheng brought a video clip to *Youtube* asking Premier Wen Jiabao to enforce justice (*zuozhu*) by punishing the Shandong officials, hence in a way endorsing the authority of the CCP central government. In a recent interview by the *Yangguang Shiwu* magazine⁵⁰, He Peirong (“Pearl”/Zhenzhu) reiterated that she was not a pro-democracy activist but just a simple person who felt the need to assist those other civil rights activists who were being persecuted by the authorities. Despite her apparent contempt for the Shandong government that perpetuated the injustice towards Chen Guangcheng, He Peirong said during the interview that she was more concerned with effectiveness of her action than unending rhetoric criticizing the government, for it is always important to leave “face” for the government, i.e. to be realistic in order to open space for positive interaction with the government in solving problems, and that she would rather believe in gradualism in building a democratic society. Such utterances of moderation of course also reflect the vulnerability of the civil rights activists, especially those who are less known internationally and hence more helpless in the face of State persecution and abuse, who desperately need to protect themselves against the recurring charge of “inciting subversion of State power” that the State has been unfailingly using to put them away. Such asymmetry in power relationship between the *weiquan* activism’s assertion and the Party-State’s domination (which while coercive, does exhibit certain degree of tactical flexibility as in the case of the Wukan uprising and the Shifang incident) that could at the risk of oversimplification be probably described as “mutualistic symbiosis” (see Figure 16), i.e. to a certain extent benefiting both sides.

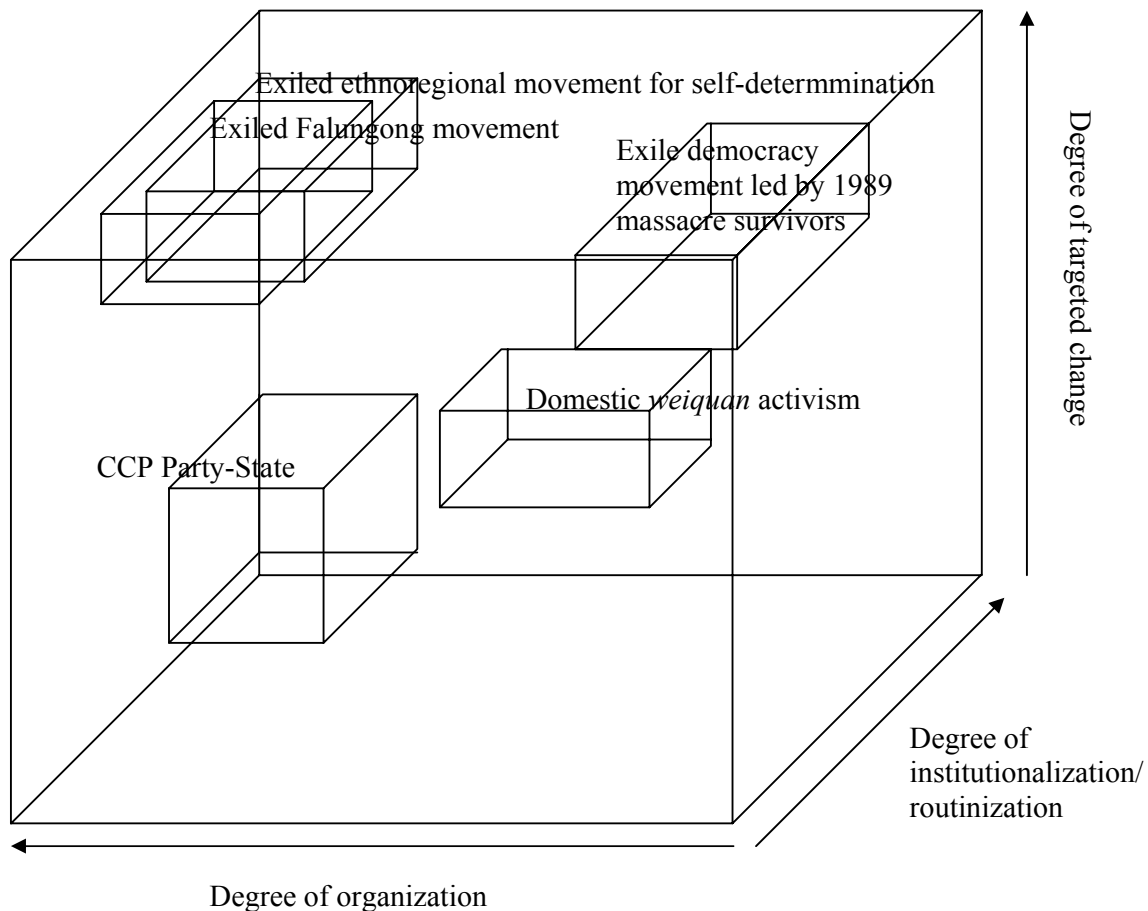
Figure 16 State Domination and NVA Assertion: Mutualistic Symbiosis

Source: Schema based on Vaughan and Archer (1971: 16-32).

Going back to Figure 14, shown on the vertical axis is the ideological dimension of NVA, or the “pragmatic-ideological” dimension of Weber and Burrowes’s typology, which indicates “the nature of the commitment to nonviolence and the approach to conflict” utilized by activists, including “the importance attached to the relationship between means and ends and the attitude towards the opponent” (Weber and Burrowes, 1991). Today’s mainly exiled democracy movement and the Falungong resistance movement fall on the “instrumental”, or “pragmatic” in Weber and Burrowes’s terminology, side of the spectrum in their mission to defeat the Party-State whose relentless and uncompromising persecution of them has left them with no choice but view the conflict between themselves and their common antagonist as one stemmed from and continued to be fueled by incompatible and irreconcilable interests. This position is in stark contrast to 1989’s Tiananmen protesters and today’s *weiquan* activists who, in a sense, view the Party-State as a partner in their struggle to bring about social justice for the masses. Instead of aiming at nothing short of dismantling the political monopoly of the Party, an end they perceive as impractical and might even be harming their cause, they are more willing to work with the Party – or what they perceive as the more

conscientious and moderate faction of the Party – to eventually bring about meaningful reform of the Party-State as a partner and a means to promote social justice. They, as portrayed in Figure 5, hence fall on the “fundamental” wing of the spectrum, to be exponents who, as Weber and Burrowes described, “choose nonviolent action for ethical reasons and believe in the unity of means and ends” and more fundamentally, “may view nonviolence as a way of life” rather merely as an instrument of political struggle – be that a manifestation of some personal belief or faith, or an acceptance of a second-best solution after carefully weighing the costs and benefits of, or of the struggle for, more drastic structural transformations. Related to Figure 14, a three-dimensional typology of political actions in terms of degree of targeted change, degree of institutionalization/routinization and degree of organization of the Party-State and the NVA, including the ethnoterritorial movements, is shown in Figure 17.

Figure 17 China: Typology of Political Actions of Contemporary Sociopolitical Actors



Source: Based on Zhao (2008: 767). Figure 26-1.

With the carrot-and-stick approach to maintain its survival, the once-brutal-dictatorship-turned-benevolent-*dictablanda* (à la O'Donnell and Schmitter, 1986)⁵¹ has managed to preserve the *status quo* of its own rule as well as the interests of the “other power-holders” by both selling the credit it claimed on behalf the industrious, enterprising and persevering masses whose newly freed entrepreneurial spirit, long-recognized in the communities of their brethren worldwide, resulted from the Party’s repudiation of the Maoist policies, has doubtlessly led to the country’s economic success during the economic reform decades since 1979, as well as extracting the support of these “other power-holders” who are willing to abdicate their opportunity to rule in exchange for other kinds of protection by the ensuing strong State run by the present regime (Stepan, 1985), in a *faute de mieux* deal much akin to Karl Marx’s description of the Bonapartist regime in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852). Marx’s classic analysis of Bonapartism as a basis of State autonomy rests mainly in the sharing of common interests between the State and the dominant group, which in the case of contemporary China, the ruling CCP regime and the dominant social élite and groups whose inability to overcome the present State’s monopoly of violence to force a regime change has given the Party-State the opportunity to use the leverage gained both to preserve the *status quo* and to propound its claim as the protector of stability and prosperity in exchange for the acceptance of its legitimacy, for even when ‘a government’s use of force imposes a large cost, some people may well decide that the government’s other services outbalance the costs of acceding to its monopoly of violence’ (Tilly, 1985: 172), though it could turn out to be a Faustian bargain that these social élite and interest groups might live to rue. In the stylized representation in Yeoh (2010: 254, Figure 8), proscription of even the slightest manifestation of dissent against the one-party rule has managed to contain societal political action to the routine intra-party politics at the far bottom right-hand corner, despite the sporadic outbursts of people power usually stemming from localized grievances which have always been quickly suppressed. Amidst all this, individual political actors are playing a central role in giving existence to the obduracy of the system, for the causal powers of systems and structures cannot exist without the mediation through the human agency, as Archer (2003) admits despite her rejection of the theorem of the duality of agency and structure.

Hence, while State-making gives existence to durable instruments of surveillance and control within a country, the establishment of the State apparatus, together with the process of war making and resource extraction, also necessitates the forming of alliances by State managers with specific social classes, whose members contribute resources and technical services, as well as assist to ensure the compliance of the rest of the population, “all in return for a measure of protection against their own rivals and enemies” (Tilly, 1985: 181, 183) who of course include the massive labouring classes always need to be suppressed and subdued – which in turn seems to respond to the question posed by Lynn White at the beginning of her book *Political Booms*: Why are all the main parties in the East Asian countries she studied including China’s ex- but still nominally communist party so business-oriented and relatively uninterested in workers? (White, 2009: 3) On the other hand, it is indeed a basic characteristic of such a racketeer government – one that perpetuate its power through violence – that brutality is part and parcel of its drive to maintain stability, at all costs.

“At all costs” indeed – for instance for the whole country, the government’s *weiwen* (maintaining stability) allocation amounted to 7.017 hundred billion yuan in 2012 (which the government defined as “public security” expenditures), as compared to 6.703 hundred billion yuan for national defense.⁵² Professor Sun Liping of Tsinghua University’s Faculty of Social Sciences in a recent report⁵³ comments on the sharp increase in the very high *weiwen*

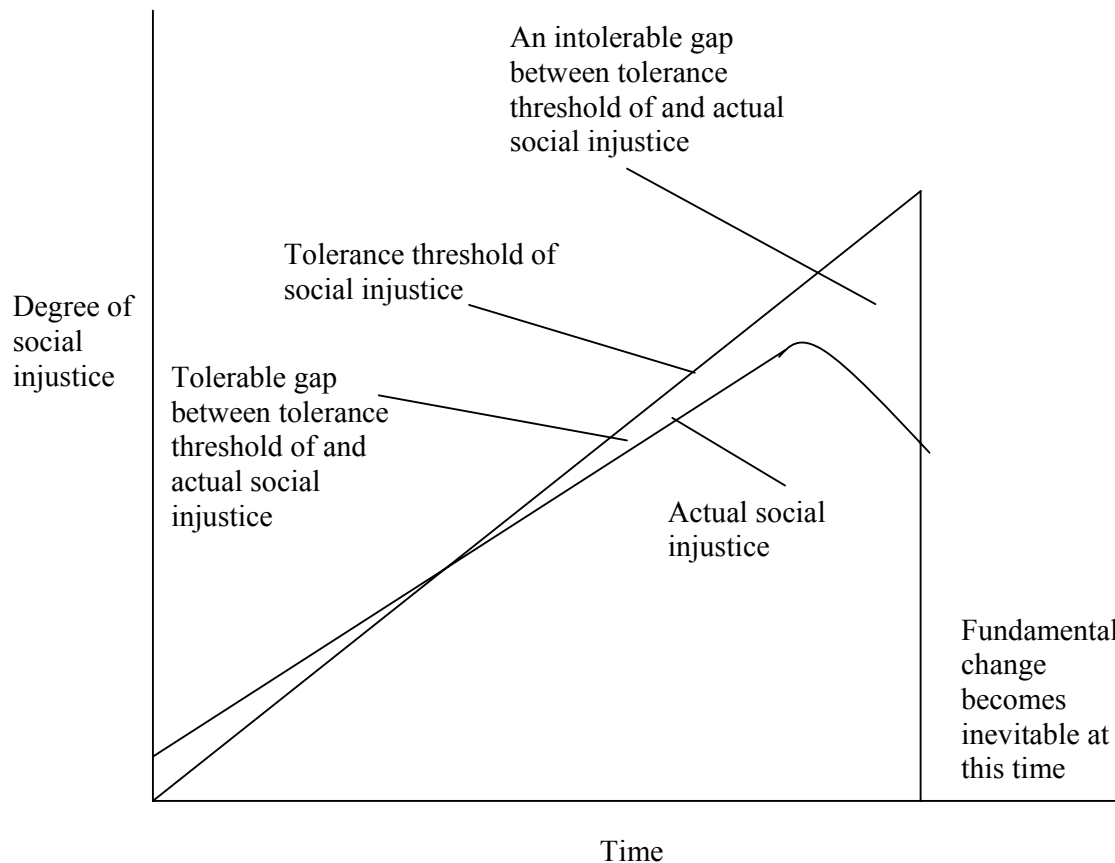
expenditure which in some places has reached a spare-no-expense, regardless-of-cost proportion. Part of these expenses actually do not make economic sense, according to Yu Jianrong, director of the Center for the Study of Social Issues at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, as, e.g., ten thousand yuan spent on blocking a *shangfang* petitioner could have been better spent on helping to solve the petitioner's problems. The root of the issue is of course that the cause of the *shangfang* lies more often than not in corrupt State-business collusion whose tentacles go deep into the core of the racketeer State, while the *shangfang-weiqian* activism is seen as a destabilizing element threatening the rule of the one-party State. Such worries on the part of the Party-State are not unfounded, for a normally tolerable gap that exists between the tolerant threshold of and actual social injustice due to effective "protection" function of a racketeer government could grow into uncontrollable proportions if left unchecked, as illustrated in Figure 18. Such great emphasis on *weiwen* and containment of the threat from the dissidents as reflected in the rocketing *weiwen* cost seen above can be observed in the tremendous expansion of the power of the *Zhengfawei* (Political and Legal Committee of the CCP) since the June 1989 Beijing massacre. The Central Political and Legal Committee of the CCP in its present form which was set up in 1980 was abolished in 1988 under Hu Yaobang and Zhao Ziyang's effort of political reform that suggested the separation of Party and Government but was reinstalled after the massacre and the purge of Zhao Ziyang. The dropping of *Zhengfawei* secretary from CCP's Politburo Standing Committee when the latter's membership was reverted from nine to seven with the conclusion of the 18th National Congress of the CCP on 15th November 2012 thus has to be one of the most significant institutional changes amidst the leadership transition that has otherwise shown little surprises given the overall "conservative" make-up of new standing committee.⁵⁴

The reason for the unparalleled quest for economic achievement, of reckless GDPism at the expense of equity, and the spare-no-expense cultivation of a glorious national image from the 0.9 billion-yuan 2008 Olympic opening gala to the space programme within a national environment of widespread poverty, widening inequality and increasingly acute social injustice as a result of such runaway development can be and in fact needs to be seen in the same light.⁵⁵ In an article later deleted from *Gongshiwang*,⁵⁶ Chinese scholar Cai Shenkun questions whether a yearly spending of hundreds of billions of yuan on a million-strong Chinese police force (or probably above ten million if inclusive of local non-police or para-police public security teams) within an environment devoid of judicial independence is leading to out-of-control, self-justified *weiwen*-induced corruption.

Defining a racketeer as someone who creates a threat and then charges for its reduction, Tilly (1985), by such standard, considers governments' provision of protection as qualifying as racketeering:

To the extent that the threats against which a given government protects its citizens are imaginary or are consequences of its own activities, the government has organized a protection racket. Since governments themselves commonly simulate, stimulate, or even fabricate threats of external war and since the repressive and extractive activities of governments often constitute the largest current threats to the livelihoods of their own citizens, many governments operate in essentially the same ways as racketeers.

(Tilly, 1985: 171)

Figure 18 Social Injustice under a Racketeer Government and Fundamental Change

Source: Based on Davies's J-Curve Theory of Revolution. See Vander Zanden (1988: 584), Figure 21.2 (adapted from Davies, 1962: 6, Figure 1).

Whether in terms of evoking the “hundred years of national humiliation” at the hands of the Western capitalist and Japanese militarist imperialists and her neighbour’s threat to her self-declared sovereignty over the whole of South China Sea on the external front, or branding all who challenge the self-perceived legitimacy of the Party’s continued monopoly of political power and through organized action aim to replace it with a multiparty “Western” electoral democracy, as legally guilty of “inciting subversion of State power”, is the 21st century witnessing the strengthening of a Chinese racketeer State that has never hesitated to mobilize its formidable monopoly of violence to ensure the survival of its own rule, which is today probably nothing more than a terrifying embodiment of a “web of [...] cliques, factions, and internal knots of organized crime” in the words Garnaut (2012) uses to describe today’s corruption-racked People’s Liberation Army (PLA). With the June Fourth massacre, which brought a tragic end to the hundred days of demonstrations in 1989 which began as student-led anti-corruption protests, leaving behind a vacuum of ideology, purpose and integrity “which money has rushed to fill”⁵⁷, corruption has become “the glue that keeps the whole system together, after the age of idealism” in a secretive gargantuan system where “gangs” and clusters of patronage and bribery are congealing together by favours and corruption (*ibid.*)

According to economic historian Federic Lane, it is the business of governments to sell protection, regardless of whether people would want this protection. Seeing from the economic perspective, Lane's argument for State's monopoly of violence is based on the fact that the very activity of producing and controlling violence enjoys large economies of scale, hence is in favour of a monopoly (competition would in general raise costs) (Lane, 1950, 1958)⁵⁸, which in turn gives rise to a "tribute" (i.e. monopoly profit) that is otherwise called "extortion" in Ames and Rapp's adaptation which sees analogy of such government action with predation, coercion, piracy, banditry and racketeering (Ames and Rapp, 1977).⁵⁹

In a critique of Lane, Tilly (1985: 181) breaks organized violence perpetrated by agents of states down into four different activities: war making ("eliminating or neutralizing their own rivals outside the territories in which they have clear and continuous priority as wielders of force"), State making ("eliminating or neutralizing their rivals inside those territories"), protection ("eliminating or neutralizing the enemies of their clients"), and extraction ("acquiring the means of carrying out the first three activities – war making, state making, and protection"), all of which being dependent upon the State's tendency to monopolize the concentrated means of coercion. "From the perspectives of those who dominate the state," posits Tilly, "each of them – if carried on effectively – generally reinforces the others." Upon successfully eliminating its internal rivals – in the context of the bloody history of the CCP, the "anti-revolutionaries", opponents of the one-party State and other dissidents – the State greatly strengthens its ability to extract resources, to wage war or simply to flex its military muscles in the regional or global arena, and to protect its chief supporters, who were the landlords, armed retainers of the monarch, and churchmen in European history (*ibid.*) and in our present context consist of cadres and apparatchiks, and even "princelings" and Party-linked businessmen who are central to the interest and survival of the Party-State, as well as the co-opted intellectuals serving to uphold the image of legitimacy of the regime.

This brings us back to the issue of the regime's legitimacy which relies so much on CCP's seemingly proven ability to deliver on the economic front and China's astounding new national strength for which the Party has been given so much or even sole credit. Contrary to the "receptive to the governed" argument⁶⁰, legitimacy according to Arthur Stinchcombe depends rather little on abstract principle or assent of the governed for the "person *over whom power is exercised* is not usually as important as *other power-holders*" (Stinchcombe, 1968: 150, italics in the original)⁶¹ the probability of whose confirmation of the decisions of a given authority constitutes the latter's legitimacy. These other authorities, says Tilly (1985), "are much more likely to confirm the decisions of a challenged authority that controls substantial force; not only fear of retaliation, but also desire to maintain a stable environment recommend that general rule [which] underscores the importance of the authority's monopoly of force" (Tilly, 1985: 171-172). Lynn White in her four-country study⁶² of money-power nexus observed that: "By no means are state agents the only powerholders with whom business owners (as well as regional gangsters and mob-affiliated political canvassers) make liaisons. They also link up with each other. The coherent state, even if it behaves as a single actor, is just one of the interlocutors for other networks in either a fair or coercive 'civil' polity." (White, 2009: 37) In a wider context, it is in this way that these "other power-holders", be they societal pressure groups, professionals, or academics and the intelligentsia, "have been co-opted into the decision-making process, rewarded with perks and privileges, and are no longer available as a source of inspiration [for the dissident activists ...]", having retreated "from 'politically engaged and intellectually oppositional topics' to inquiries

reconcilable with the prevailing order and designed to legitimate the hegemonic order” (Benton, 2010: 321-322)⁶³. The “hegemonic order” here refers to that of a regime claiming credit for the economic successes that brought along heightened international stature and diplomatic prowess and propounding existing stability as the key to continued economic prosperity which itself actually being the unfailing characteristic of the Chinese and Chinese diaspora worldwide – an achievement which could have been brought to fruition naturally by the people once the Maoist yoke, both in the forms of the suppression of free entrepreneurial spirit and the political horrors, was lifted by the same regime that had foisted that yoke upon the Chinese people for three decades since 1949.⁶⁴ Anyhow, according to Tilly, a tendency to monopolize the means of violence “makes a government’s claim to provide protection, in either the comforting or the ominous sense of the word, more credible and more difficult to resist” (Tilly, 1985: 172).

Hence, while many authors inside and outside China have been lauding the country’s “grassroots democratization” and intra-Party reforms as pointing to a promising path of de-authoritarian evolvement, the perception that China is moving out from the “politically closed authoritarian” category of regime type⁶⁵ could prove to be as misleadingly whimsical as it is empirical unfounded. Furthermore, past record of mismanagement and repressive, often violent, response to dissent, including the excesses during the Cultural Revolution both in China proper and in the ethnic regions like Tibet and Xinjiang, and the June Fourth atrocities, may not be encouraging for many.

On the side of the civil societal response to State repression, as can be seen earlier in Figure 14, while the current *weiquan* activism shares much with the wider democracy movement in terms of assertion for social justice and necessary political defiance, the two diverge when it comes to both practical strategy and fundamental ideological outlook and such differences would inevitably engender deviations in the nature of commitment to NVA and approach to conflict with the opponent. After all, as Dirlik and Prazniak observe,

[...] the question of dissent covers a broad spectrum: from liberal aspirations to a democracy similar to those of other advanced societies to the defense of legal rights, intellectual freedom and the pursuit of justice (if not equality) within the existing system to anti-colonial struggles for autonomy among minority peoples, and the struggles for autonomy and democracy in Hong Kong. If these struggles share one thing in common, it is the demand upon the Party-state for greater openness and respect or laws. Otherwise, they are also at odds with one another in their various causes with divisive consequences. It would be difficult if not impossible to find even on the left many who would condone greater autonomy to Tibet and Xinjiang, or letting go of Taiwan or Hong Kong [...] Dissent, in other words, is not just a matter of democracy and communism but shares in all the complexities of Chinese politics.

(Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 289-291)

Such unity and differences are shown in Table 8 and Table 9. For instance, related to the issue of “means and ends”, it would be interesting to see how the leadership changes in CCP (reflecting its factional struggles) after its 18th National Congress as well as possible factional changes in the governments in exile (post-Dalai Lama scenario for the Tibetan government in exile, developments in World Uyghur Congress and Southern Mongolian Democratic Alliance) will affect the State’s approach in terms of suppression or accommodation and minorities’ response in terms of moderation or radicalism in their continued struggle for ethnic self-determination whether in the form of autonomy or secessionism.

Table 8 Chinese Democracy Movement and *Weiwan* Activism: The Strategic Dimension

	Democracy Movement	<i>Weiwan</i> Action
Criterion	Transformative, revolutionist	Reformative, involutional
Analysis of Social Framework	Relatively structural; focusing on a structural analysis of overall sociopolitical relationships	Relatively conservative; focusing on a particular goal within an existing sociopolitical framework
Aim	Revolution (planned change of <i>system</i>)	Reform (planned change of <i>elements</i> within a system)
Operational Timeframe	Long Term	Short/Medium Term

Source: Based on framework from Weber and Burrowes (1991); Vinthagen (2010).

Table 9 Chinese Democracy Movement and *Weiwan* Activism: The Ideological Dimension

	Democracy Movement	<i>Weiwan</i> Action
Criterion	Instrumental, practical	Fundamental, ideational
Nature of Commitment	Despite lack of progress, still committed to NVA as the most plausible and effective means to effect change	Despite State persecution under the pretext of <i>weiwen</i> , still committed to NVA as ethically best in fighting for social justice
Means and Ends	Relentless persecution by the Party-State and frustration over lack of progress of a moderate approach could be leading to belief that means and ends are separable, precipitating radicalism, e.g. justification of “lies against lies” in media combat, especially in territorial ethnic minority resistance movements which could more easily foster a “we vs. they” mentality	Believing in the unity and indivisibility of means and ends, because the end can never justify the means “for the simple and obvious reason that the means employed determine the nature of the ends produced” (Huxley, 1938: 9)
Approach to Conflict with the Party-State	Incompatible interests; aiming at terminating one-party political monopoly and replacing it with multi-party free and fair electoral system; rejecting the compromise solution of a <i>dictablanda</i> or a benevolent ruler within the Party-State	Shared interests, at least with the more liberal, reformist and moderate faction within the Party-State; looking more for synergy of action together with “enlightened” members of the central Party-State against local corruption and abuse of power
Approach to Opponent (Party-State)	Disillusioned with the traditional idea of waiting for an “enlightened ruler” (<i>mingjun</i>) within the system (imperial court in the old days; the one-party State today), hence in a competitive relationship with ruling Party-State to destroy the Party’s political monopoly	Seeking cooperation at least with the more liberal, reformist and moderate faction within the Party-State to <i>zuozhu</i> (enforce justice) for the people

Source: Based on framework from Weber and Burrowes (1991); Vinthagen (2010).

7. Conclusion

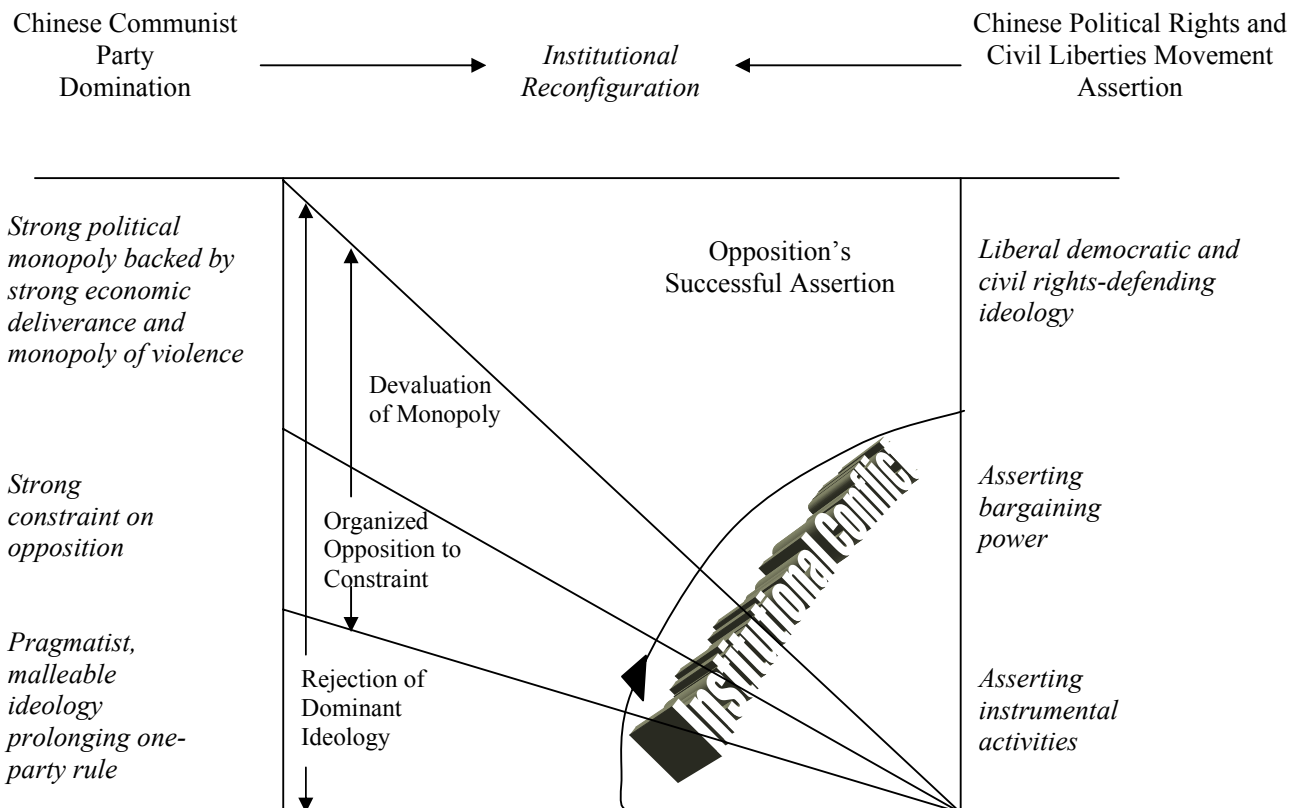
This paper has purveyed various key issues underlying China's socioeconomic and sociopolitical transition, such as poverty, inequality and social stratification, and the relations between structure and agency within the overall political milieu in contemporary China where social change is moving apace amidst astounding economic transformation. Ironically, as pointed out in the paper, some factors which at first look seem to be system-threatening may instead work for the ruling regime's advantage. According to Perry (2002), for instance, social protests in today's China constitute one of the major components of social stability, as the protests serve as checks against the leaders' abuse of power and as mechanisms ensuring the accountability of the government, thereby "undergirding rather than undermining the political system" in China's authoritarian polity where multi-party competitive elections do not exist to provide an effective check on the misbehaviour of State authorities.⁶⁶ In addition, Tong and Lei (2010: 499-500) considered large-scale mass incidents driven by economic grievances, which were due to "the misconduct of local officials or the process of socioeconomic transformation when there was a lack of experience in handling these problems or the lack of proper regulations", as not regime-threatening because by asking the government to *zuozhu* (enforce justice), the protests had in fact endorsed the legitimacy of the regime, and as long as the regime had plenty of financial resources to satisfy the protesters' demands – hence the significance of GDPism as a cornerstone of regime maintenance – it further consolidates its legitimacy. On the other hand, in the case of inequality, Friedman (2009) argued that the beneficiaries of economic growth were able to find their own individual solutions to their problems and resigned themselves to an authoritarian government as a defense against the threat from potentially vengeful losers in the market economy, thereby rendering social polarization inconducive to democratic sentiment among them.⁶⁷

It is thus in such situational context that the largely single-issue civil rights activisms are struggling to work within China's current written legal framework (that at least is in existence on paper) and in most cases what they are challenging are the corrupt or extra-judicial practices, abuses of power and other excesses of the local – provincial, county, prefecture, municipal or village – governments, authorities or officials rather than the legitimacy of the CCP-monopoly of the central State, and they are hence in a way, even just in a tactical way, endorsing the legitimacy of CCP's right to rule. However, to consider such single-issue civil rights activisms as posing little threat to CCP's enforced political monopoly is to underestimate their potential threat to the CCP central State by ignoring their intrinsic concertedness with the wider democracy movement (which by itself is currently characterized distinctively by weakness in both bargaining power and instrumental activities) in terms of the common struggle for human rights – a "jasmine revolution-style" spectre as illustrated in Figure 19 – though the relative emphasis on either political rights or civil liberties could differ in some ways from one to another mainly due to environmental differences and as a response to constraints on the ground. Such constraints, as shown in Figure 20, largely come more directly from the local governments, authorities or officials, and the degree of brutality and excesses differs from locality to locality, depending variously on local political atmosphere, the relative power of hardliners⁶⁸ *vis-à-vis* the more liberal, or at least less hard-line, factions⁶⁹ projected through the appointments of local party secretaries and other officials, the degree of discretion of the local governments and officials derived much from a complex web of tier-to-tier linkages all the way up to the centre through a whole range of illicit but prevalent arrangements of bribery and lobbying, and the choice of the central government to continue turning a blind eye towards the excesses of the local

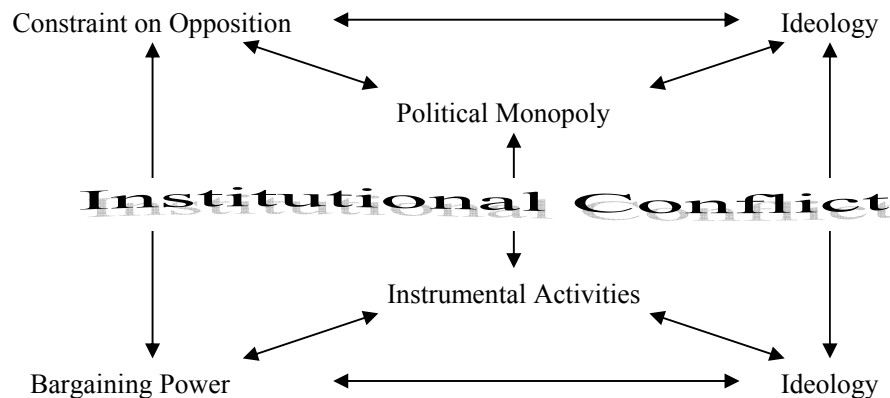
governments and officials which it tacitly endorses as its hatchet men to protect central power and whose brutality is in many ways a direct result of the pressure from the centre to *weiwen*, or alternatively the tactical decision of the centre to tolerate a more liberal, benevolent approach at the local level in a particular case at a particular time. A good example is a comparison between the local government's treatment of Chen Guangcheng in Shandong and the Wukan incident in Guangdong.

Clamping down on civil rights activists and whistle blowers like Cheng Guangcheng, Hu Jia and Ai Weiwei on the basis of *weiwen* could be initiated directly from the central government if the voicing of grievances were to be seen by the latter as potentially risky and possible to trigger a wider movement especially in view of the recent trend of coalescence of single-issue activisms – a spectre also illustrated in Figure 19 and a phenomenon that brings to mind how the 1989 Tiananmen protests that started off as students' protests circled around campus dormitory conditions, jobs and corruption, triggered by the death of the respected former president Hu Yaobang, soon escalated into a wider movement joined by intellectuals, reporters and others from all walks of life, which finally and inevitably spiraled into general pro-democracy demonstrations that threatened the political monopoly of the CCP.

Figure 19 State Domination and NVA Assertion: Institutional Reconfiguration



Source: Schema based on Vaughan and Archer (1971: 16-32).

Figure 20 Assertion, Constraint and Institutional Conflict

Source: Schema based on Vaughan and Archer (1971: 16-32).

Or it could be, sometimes according to voices from the centre, a result of over-zealous implementation on the part of the local leaders and cadres. Guangdong's deputy party secretary cum *Zhengfawei* (Political and Legal Committee of the CCP) secretary Zhu Mingguo, who was sent to set up a working group to deal with the Wukan crisis, has commented on what he criticized as "lopsided interpretation of 'stability above all else'" on the part of some local government leaders and cadres, which has led to inappropriate responses to "mass incidents" as the misguided logic of equating "being safe and sound" as "being without incident", according to him, has resulted not in rights-oriented but power-oriented *weiwen*, not active but passive *weiwen*, and not harmonious but coercive *weiwen*. ("一些地方和领导干部片面理解 '稳定压倒一切', 认为平安就是 '不出事' ... 这种逻辑下的维稳, 不是权利维稳, 而是权力维稳; 不是动态维稳, 而是静态维稳; 不是和谐维稳, 而是强制维稳。")⁷⁰

Many would see that relying on such "power-oriented, coercive *weiwen*" while postponing critical decisions on the last leg of reform – that in the political sphere – could only be postponing the inevitable and in fact accentuating the existing social contradictions, for both the speed and volatility brought about by the country's breakneck economic transformation under increasing morphogenesis are making whatever State-sanctioned system with the bottom line of one-party rule short-lived in viability when all State-guided *modi vivendi* as such could be at best *pro tem*, though Dirlik and Prazniak have questioned such teleological anticipation by placing the present Chinese authoritarian capitalism in a global comparative context:

Viewed through the prism of the primitive accumulation of capital within the context of global capitalism, the PRC's developmental trajectory invites a more sociological approach to questions of social protest and political repression. We may ask, for instance, whether in the expropriation of land rights, the concentration of wealth, the exploitation and mistreatment of labour, immense class, gender, ethnic and racial differences, and violent suppression of challenges to the status quo, the contemporary PRC might compare favourably with the United States in the second half of the 19th century – without even referring to civil war and the colonial abjection of the native population? How does the PRC compare in these regards with other contemporary societies embarked on "primitive accumulation," from Brazil and

South Africa, to Turkey, Russia and India? Is the excessive preoccupation with repression in the PRC a function not of its record as such as it is of the greater visibility it has acquired on the world scene by virtue of successful economic development? On the other hand, this comparison also raises the question of whether or not the PRC may be able to follow the same trajectory as the United States earlier moving toward a more egalitarian and just society once done with the business of “primitive accumulation?” If that was possible at an earlier time, is it still possible under conditions of global capitalism?

(Dirlik and Prazniak, 2012: 298)

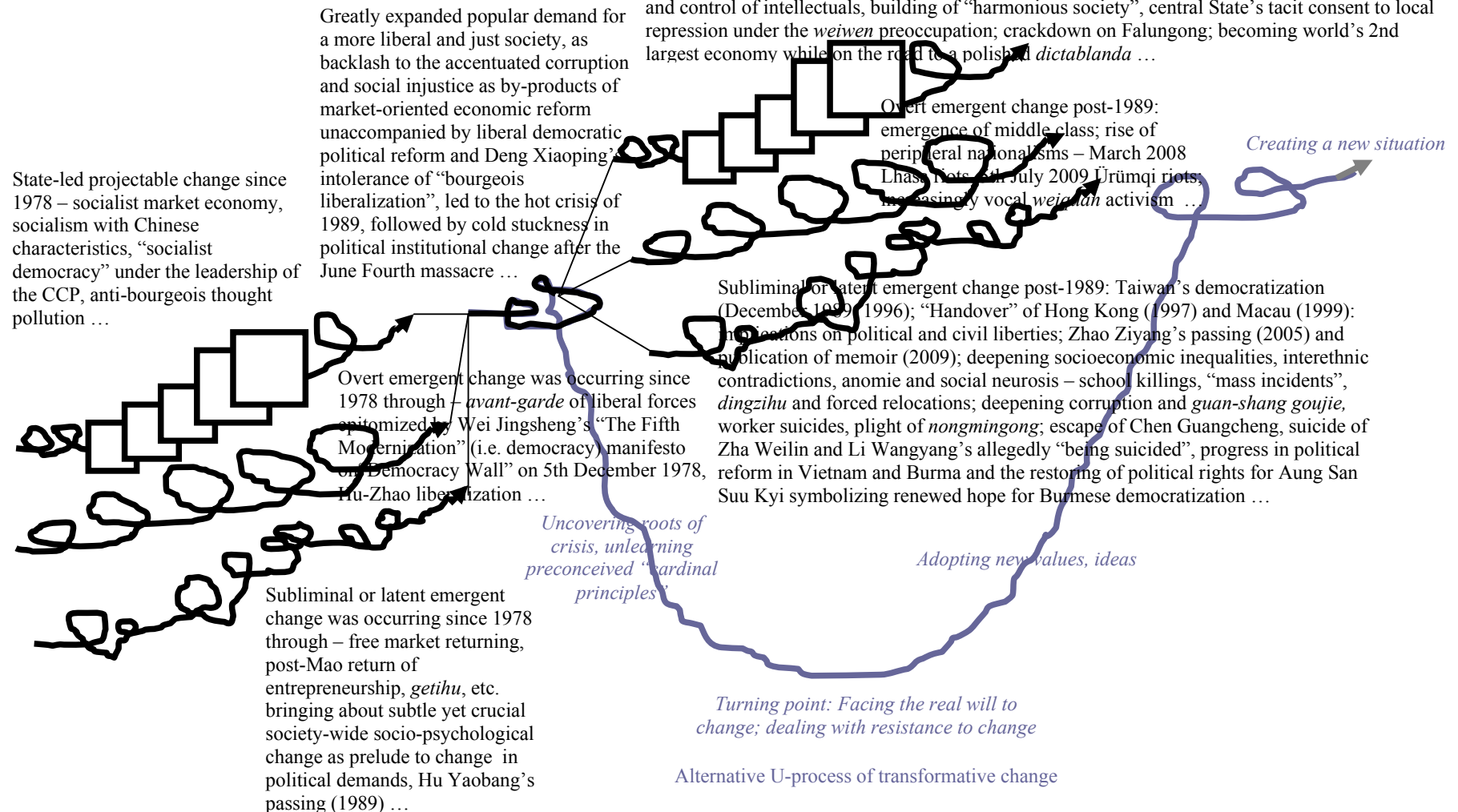
Finally, according to the results of an Internet survey conducted during April-May 2012 by Li Kaisheng, an associate professor at the Xiangtan University in China’s Hunan Province, released on the *Gongshiwang*, an academic thought website, a majority of the respondents were found to be favouring the Western, North Atlantic liberal democratic political system based on separation of powers.⁷¹ The survey was conducted from 13th April 2012 to 13th May 2012 with a returned sample of 4,697. The conduct of this survey, according to Li, stemmed from his conviction that what really determines China’s future is not or mainly is not the thought of an élite minority, but the opinion and cognition of the majority of the masses towards the country and its society. His survey results show that among the political systems which the respondents were most in favour of the top five were that of the United State of America (71.98 per cent), Sweden (32.38 per cent), United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (30.76 per cent), Germany (28.81 per cent) and Singapore (27.51 per cent). On the other hand, top the list of political systems the respondents were most not in favour of were that of North Korea (73.62 per cent) and China (54.12 per cent), followed by Iran, Vietnam and Pakistan. Besides that, the majority of respondents viewed corruption, inadequate degree of democratization and social injustice as the biggest challenges facing today’s China, with 81 per cent of the respondents considering the problem of corruption as “very serious” and 17 per cent “relatively serious”. Putting aside the usual limitations of such on-line Internet surveys, which in this case is further complicated by the fact that the posting of its results on the *Gongshiwang* had apparently been swiftly deleted by the website administrators⁷², the results have lent support to the well recognized subtle undercurrents going on in the scene of Chinese sociopolitical change – the subliminal changes surging beneath the State-orchestrated projectable changes which still continue to draw a line against adopting North Atlantic democracy and its *trias politica* (tripartite separation of powers) for checks and balances⁷³, as shown in Figure 21, based on Reeler’s threefold theory of social change (Reeler, 2007).⁷⁴ “Left alone, crises do get unconsciously resolved over time, tragically or happily or somewhere in-between”, observed Reeler (2007: 12), “But they can also be more consciously and proactively resolved through well led or facilitated transformative change processes.” The resolution of the 1989 crisis in a tragedy and the purge of the political reformists in a way shut down the transformative change wing⁷⁵ of the bifurcation facing the CCP at that time and led to the protracted cold stuckness in sociopolitical modernization and its uneasy coexistence with accelerated market reform that brought national economic prosperity. Nevertheless, at this time of such overall economic success and unprecedented national strength, while hymns are being sung, justifiably, to short-term economic miracle and national glory, much care should probably be taken in the officially sanctioned building of a “people first” (*yi min wei ben*) “harmonious society” (*hexie shehui*) that such eulogizing would not be at the expense of the golden opportunities for more holistic transformative reforms, and that in full recognition of the overt and subliminal emergent changes that have not ceased to exist as undercurrents in a nexus of contradictions beneath the officially sanctioned projectable changes, these projectable changes would not be looked upon as policy guidance simply to maintain and justify the cult of a *dictablanda* at the expense of the long-term greater good.

Figure 21 China's Political Institutional Change since 1978: Institutions, Agents and Events

Emile K.K. Yeoh, *Teleological Ambiguities of the China Model*

ICS, UM-EAI, *Journal of Chinese Studies*, 12, 4 (September 2010)

Projectable change post-1989: Deng's *nanxun* brought continuous economic reforms leading to *renmin rensheng*, *liu* *four cardinal principles* reaffirming and upholding CCP's political supremacy; thought control; resistance to bourgeois liberalization; Deng's "stability above all else" directive led to Party-State's ruthless *weiwen*; socialism with Chinese characteristics; Party-State's promotion of fundamental definition of human rights as just the people's rights to be fed, to be sheltered, to be educated and to be employed; continued Dengist stance against adopting North Atlantic democracy and its *trias politica* (tripartite separation of powers) for checks and balances, promoting central State nationalism and cracking down on peripheral nationalisms; controlled intra-Party democratization, grassroot democracy: village elections, "stick and carrot" co-optation and control of intellectuals, building of "harmonious society", central State's tacit consent to local repression under the *weiwen* preoccupation; crackdown on Falungong; becoming world's 2nd largest economy while on the road to a polished *dictablanda* ...



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Notes

¹ Or more officially, the “Communist Party of China” (CPC).

² 维稳 (maintaining stability).

³ <http://www.thinkread.cn/author/dengyuwen/>

⁴ *When China Rules the World: The Rise of the Middle Kingdom and the End of the Western World*, London: Allen Lane, 2009.

⁵ *Deng Xiaoping and the Transformation of China*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press., 2011.

⁶ See, e.g., Qi (2010: 420).

⁷ See a recent WikiLeaks’s revelation of a telegraph from Shanghai’s American consulate to Washington in October 2007 (ODN, 5th August 2012). Current news items in this paper, unless otherwise stated, are sourced from 东方日报 (*Oriental Daily News/ODN*), a Malaysian daily in Chinese, with China news sources mainly from the Hong Kong and Taiwan media.

⁸ Public grievances against such frenzied quest for GDP growth with little regard for human and environmental consequences have led some Chinese netizens to translate GDP mockingly as “gou de pi 狗的屁”, meaning “dog’s fart”.

⁹ ODN, 12th October 2012.

¹⁰ Although the scope of China’s economic decentralization goes far beyond decentralization in public finance, but even measured solely by the latter, China has been said to be the world’s most economically decentralized country (Xu, 2008: 187-188) given that China’s local public spending has since the mid- and late 1980s been steady at about 70 per cent of her total national public spending, whereas in federal countries such as the US, Germany and Russia, the proportions of local public spending in total national public spending are only respectively 46 per cent, 40 per cent and 38 per cent. From the angle of central-local economic relations, China is also one of the most, or to some, even *the* most economically decentralized countries in the world, with most parts of resources controlled by the local governments, including the allocation of land, energy and financial resources (*ibid.*: 187). In fact, one of the characteristics of China’s economic decentralization is the relative self-sufficiency of the local economy whether at the provincial level or the county level. The local governments are fully responsible for the launching and coordination of local reform, for local economic development, and for the legislation and law enforcement within their respective jurisdictions. Such a characteristic not only marks China’s economic institution apart from a central planning economic system, but also makes her local governments more powerful in competences than the local governments in most federal countries in the world. (*ibid.*: 188)

¹¹ <http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/dfpd/2012-07/31/content_15634274.htm>; 人民网/中国共产党新闻网 <<http://theory.people.com.cn/n/2012/0731/c136457-18634867.html>>; *Ming Pao* 明報 (Hong Kong), 13th August 2012.

¹² ODN, 31st August 2012.

¹³ The largest denomination of China’s renminbi 人民币 (“people’s currency”, Rmb) is yuan 元 / 圓 (Latinized symbol ¥ or 元), a term with cognates in the Japanese yen or 円 (from 圓; Latinized symbol ¥) and Korean won 원 / 圓 (Latinized symbol ₩). A yuan is equivalent to about US\$0.146.

¹⁴ Bert Hoffman, “Access to Opportunity Eases Income Inequality”, *The Star* (Malaysian daily), 21st January 2006.

¹⁵ Or more officially, the “Communist Party of China” (CPC).

¹⁶ Yan (2010: 179), based on data from *China Statistical Yearbook 2008*.

¹⁷ In general, though not totally without ambiguity, “private entrepreneurs” or “private enterprise owners” (*siying qiyezhushu* 私营企业主 / *minying qiyejia* 民营企业家) here refer mainly to owners of domestic individually owned, family-based or shareholding firms with eight or more employees though joint ventures and wholly foreign-owned firms are not by definition excluded, while individual entrepreneurs who employ fewer than eight employees are referred to as “self-employed” / *getihu* 个体户. For more details on the ten major social strata, see Li and Chen (2004: 13), Figure 1-3, and Yeoh (2010: 270), Figure 18.

¹⁸ Cited by Tong and Lei (2010: 488), the 2008 figure being from an estimate reported by Andrew Jacobs, “Dragons, Dancing Ones, Set-off a Riot in China”, *New York Times*, 10th February 2009, and an estimate of 90,000 such incidents annually for 2007, 2008, and 2009 being quoted from a Chinese insider by John Garnaut, “China Insider Sees Revolution Brewing”, *Sidney Morning Herald*, 2nd March 2010.

¹⁹ The term “xiagang” refers to redundant workers mainly at State enterprises, without directly describing them as “unemployed”. Still officially attached to their work units or enterprises, the *xiagang* workers continue to receive basic minimum subsidies for their living and medical expenses, and are encouraged to change job, probably through State-run job and re-employment centres, or go into small businesses. In line with State enterprise reforms, the number of *xiagang* workers has been on the rise: 4 million in 1995, 8 million in 1996, 12 million in 1997, 16 million in 1998, 20 million in 1999, though dropping to 11 million in 2001. (Zhou, 2006: 289)

²⁰ See Chen (2004: 32), cited in Tong and Lei (2010: 488-489).

²¹ ODN, 13th June 2011, 18th June 2011.

²² ODN, 12th June 2011, 18th June 2011.

²³ ODN, 14th June 2011.

²⁴ In contrast with “free-floating aggression”, the more general concept of “scapegoating” is reserved for the transfer of hostility towards any object (Turner and Killian, 1957:19).

²⁵ Occurring in Foshan 佛山, Shenzhen 深圳, Guangzhou 广州, Huizhou 惠州, Shangrao 上饶, Qingdao 青岛, Changchun 长春, Taiyuan 太原, Sanya 三亚, Zhongshan 中山, Shanwei 汕尾, Ningde 宁德, Hefei 合肥, Xuzhou 徐州, Shijiazhuang 石家庄, Chengdu 成都, Nanping 南平, Beijing 北京 and Wuhan 武汉, some resulted in severe clashes between protesters and police (ODN, 21st October 2012).

²⁶ ODN, 29th December 2011.

²⁷ The tragedies befalling people who are forced to be relocated are vividly recorded in a recent book relating heart-rending tales of people who would not submit to the forced relocation to make way for the Shanghai World Expo of 2010 – a dark side of the glorious event that involved people being beaten to death, tortured and imprisoned (see Du Bin 杜斌 (2010), *Shanghai Kulou Di* 上海骷髏地 / Shanghai Calvary, Taipei: Ming Pao Ch’upanshe 明報出版社 (Ming Pao Press)). Also little reported is the plight of the 1.27 million people relocated to make way for the construction of the Three Gorges Dam, a monstrous project that put under water Hubei and Chongqing’s 20 districts and counties, over 270 villages and townships, over 1500 enterprises and over 34 million squared metres of houses. Like the above case of Shanghai, with low compensation, these “Three Gorges migrants” have since been suffering from psychological problems common to uprooted people, facing problems of adaptation, often exploited by the local authorities and feeling discriminated by the locals, and some migrant villages have turned into vice dens. (东方日报, 7th June 2010)

²⁸ Often translated as “nail house”, *dingzihu* refers to a household who refuses to be relocated to make way for real estate development.

²⁹ Hu Angang (2006), *Great Transformations in China: Challenges and Opportunities*, Oxford University Press, cited in Hutton (2006: 127).

³⁰ *Weiquan* refers to the quest for protecting and defending the civil rights of the citizenry by non-State actors. *Shangfang*, a centuries-old tradition in China, refers to the action of people with grievances who take the last resort of going to Beijing, the capital, to attempt to get their complaints heard against local injustice.

³¹ 东方日报, 18th March 2009.

³² The term “xiagang” refers to redundant workers mainly at State enterprises, without directly describing them as “unemployed”. Still officially attached to their work units or enterprises, the *xiagang* workers continue to receive basic minimum subsidies for their living and medical expenses, and are encouraged to change job, probably through State-run job and re-employment centres, or go into small businesses. In line with State enterprise reforms, the number of *xiagang* workers has been on the rise: 4 million in 1995, 8 million in 1996, 12 million in 1997, 16 million in 1998, 20 million in 1999, though dropping to 11 million in 2001. (Zhou, 2006: 289)

³³ Such as the bloody Han-Hui ethnic conflicts in 2004 and 2007.

³⁴ 东方日报, 23rd March 2009.

³⁵ Cited in Hutton (2006: 126).

³⁶ See, for instance, Professor Lü Yuanli 吕元礼’s best-selling Chinese tome “Why Can Singapore Do It?” (2007).

³⁷ Ultimately, as Fang (1991: 254-255) warned, “There is no rational basis for a belief that this kind of dictatorship can overcome the corruption that it itself has bred. Based on this problem alone, we need more effective means of public supervision and a more independent judiciary. This means, in effect, more democracy.” (“China’s Despair and China’s Hope”, originally appeared in *The New York Review of Books* on 2nd February 1989, translated by Perry Link.) Describing China as “doubtless a post-totalitarian regime ruled by a ruthless Party”, Béja (2009: 14-15) ruminated on the 20th anniversary of the Beijing-Tiananmen massacre: “Twenty years after the 4 June 1989 massacre, the CCP seems to have reinforced its legitimacy. It has not followed the communist regimes of the Soviet bloc into oblivion. Its policies of elite cooptation, subtle response to social contradictions, and

instrumental support for the ‘rule of law’ have become major complements to its continued control over the press and the political system. It has made concessions to prevent discontent from crystallizing into social movements that might challenge its rule, and it has sent in the police to silence dissidents. Over the course of the same two decades, the opposition has had to wrestle with the trauma of the June 4 Massacre and the huge difficulties that it has raised for anyone who would challenge the CCP’s primacy.”

³⁸ See, e.g. Bo (2010). In an interesting attempt at refutation of Minxin Pei’s (2006) claim of CCP’s illegitimacy, Bo has set out to refute point by point Pei’s arguments which were based upon a series of international indexes which the former listed in details: “China is one of the most authoritarian political systems in the world according to the Polity IV Project, is almost completely ‘unfree’ according to the Freedom House; and is one of the most corrupt countries according to Transparency International. China was ranked in the bottom third of the eighty countries surveyed in terms of ‘quality of governance ranking’ according to one group of the World Bank and was considered a weak state according to another group of the World Bank. China found itself next to the legion of failed states and most repressive countries in terms of ‘voice and accountability’ and also in the company of weak states such as Nicaragua, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, Egypt, and Mali in terms of ‘regulatory quality’. China was no better than Namibia, Croatia, Kuwait, and Mexico in terms of ‘government effectiveness’, was comparable to Belarus, Mexico, Tunisia, and Cuba in terms of ‘political stability’, and was in the company of Mexico, Madagascar, and Lebanon in terms of ‘rule of law’.” (Bo, 2010: 102-103, citing Pei, 2006: 5-6)

³⁹ Despite rumoured allegation that some cases could be murders linked to the factory security office (大纪元时报 (*The Epoch Times* (Malaysia)), Issue 93, June 2010).

⁴⁰ 东方日报 (*Oriental Daily News*, Malaysian daily), 21st July 2010 and 6th August 2010. Currently the number of suicides in China is huge. Suicide is now the fifth main cause of death in China where there are over 250 thousand people killing themselves every year, with a rate of a suicide every two minutes (Wang, 2008: 755). On average every day there are about 750 people in China committing suicide, and there are an additional number of 2 million people attempting suicide (non-fatal) in China every year (*ibid.*; Tang, 2007). In terms of age distribution, suicide rate in China is highest among the elderly and within the 25-34 year-old cohort; in terms of gender, China’s female suicide rate is apparently higher than male, particularly for rural female and especially high for the 25-34 year-old cohort and women above age 65 (Wang, 2008: 755; Xiao, Wang and Xu, 2003).

⁴¹ 东方日报, 17th February 2009 and 29th June 2009. Following the US (rather than British) convention, billion = 1000,000,000 and trillion = 1000,000,000,000.

⁴² 东方日报, 23rd June 2009.

⁴³ 东方日报, 29th June 2009.

⁴⁴ 东方日报, 29th June 2009.

⁴⁵ Qin Hui (2009), “China’s Low Human Rights Advantage”, *China Rights Forum*, No. 1, pp. 85-89, cited in Dirlik and Prazniak (2012: 296).

⁴⁶ *Nongye renkou quan* 农业人口圈, *chengzhen jumin quan* 城镇居民圈, *gongren quan* 工人圈, *ganbu quan* 干部圈.

⁴⁷ *Xingzheng jibie* 行政级别.

⁴⁸ Totaled about 130 million, China’s *nongmingong* have today turned into a unique community of breathtaking proportions. With a high degree of mobility, the over a hundred million people shuttling on the railways and roadways of China every year during the Spring Festival (*chunjie* 春节 – Chinese New Year) have become a unique phenomenon in the world (东方日报, 30th March 2009).

⁴⁹ *Mencius*, edited and translated with an introduction by [D.C. Lau](#), London: Penguin Books, 2005 (Penguin Classics first published 1970).

⁵⁰ Kuang Da 旷达, “Nanjing Nüzi Zhenzhu: Wo Bushi Yingxiong 南京女子珍珠: 我不是英雄” [Pearl from Nanjing: I’m not a hero], *Yangguang Shiwu* 阳光时务, 18th May 2012.

⁵¹ O’Donnell and Schmitter opines that a transition from authoritarian rule could produce a democracy, but it could also terminate with a liberalized authoritarian regime (*dictablanda*) or a restrictive, illiberal democracy (*democradura*) (O’Donnell and Schmitter, 1986: 9, cited in Diamond, 2002: 24).

While shadows of the remnants of her ghostly past still linger to haunt the one-party State, there are already telling signs that the continuing transformation from a *dictadura* (dictatorship) into a *dictablanda* leading further to a highly restrictive *democradura* in the near future is the most possible direction the CCP regime is heading to and indeed planning to head to, given the fact that the Western, “bourgeois liberal” democracy (*democracia*) has already been ruled out of the cards, or at least not until mid-2000s. In fact, following Professor Zhou Tianyong from the Central Party School, China’s authoritarian one-party political system will and should remain unchanged until at least 2037 (Zhou, Wang and Wang (eds), 2007: 2, 6, 45-46, see Bo, 2009: 10-11). This is in line with what Deng Xiaoping stated in 1987, that direct general elections could only be held after half a century had passed in the 2000s, and at the moment the country had to make do with indirect elections above the county level and direct elections only at county and below county level, given the colossal population and inadequate level of cultural quality of the people (Hu, Hu, He and Guo, 2009: 19-20, cited from 《邓小平文选》第3卷, 人民出版社1993年版, 第220~221页).

⁵² According to a 30th April 2012 Reuters report (see Hai Tao, 2012); see also report in *ODN*, 17th November 2012.

⁵³ “Yi Liyi Biaoda Zhiduhua Shixian Shehui de Changzhijiu’an 以利益表达制度化实现社会的长治久安” [Realizing society’s long-term governance and stability by institutionalization of interest expression], cited in “Gonggong Anquan Zhangdan 公共安全账单” [Bill of public security], *Caijing* 财经 [Finance and economics], 9 May 2011.

⁵⁴ *ODN*, 17th November 2012.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Cai Shenkun 蔡慎坤, “Zhongguo Teshe Weiwen Fuchu le Duoda Daijia 中国特色维稳付出了多大代价?” [What is the price of stability maintenance with special Chinese characteristics?], *Gongshiwang* 共识网, 10th May 2012.

⁵⁷ Garnaut citing a disillusioned “princeling” and former PLA colonel, Chen Xiaolu 陈小鲁, son of one of China’s 10 great marshals, Chen Yi 陈毅.

⁵⁸ Cited in Tilly (1985: 175).

⁵⁹ Cited in Tilly (1985: 175).

⁶⁰ See Bo (2010: 117).

⁶¹ Cited in Tilly (1985: 171).

⁶² On China, Thailand, Taiwan and the Philippines.

⁶³ Citing Lewis and Xue (2003: 933); Ma (2007); Xu (1999: 1, 168).

⁶⁴ Indeed, building upon the foundation set by the Hu-Zhao administration’s audacious reformist programmes, Deng Xiaoping moved forward from where his purged former protégés have left by reinvigorating the post-Tiananmen chilling politico-economic milieu through his “southern tour” (*nanxun* 南巡) in 1992, culminating lately in China first superseding Germany to become the world’s third largest economy in early 2008, ranked only after the United States of America and Japan, and finally superseding Japan in mid-2010 to become the world’s number 2. According to a report published on China’s National Bureau of Statistics website on 14th January 2009, the confirmed 2007 GDP of China at current prices amounted to 25.7306 trillion yuan, an increase of 13 per cent from the previous year (*ODN*, 16 January 2009). While observed to be still short of a third of US’s GDP, analysts had predicted China’s GDP to overtake Japan’s in three to four years, just as it overtook the United Kingdom and France in 2005 and Germany in 2008. Nevertheless, according to an announcement by Yi Gang 易纲, the director of the State Administration of Foreign Exchange and the deputy governor of China’s central bank, the People’s Bank of China, on 30 July 2010, China had already superseded Japan to become the world’s second largest economy in 2010. However, in terms of GDP per capita, Japan’s (US\$37,800) was more than 10 times that of China (US\$3,600) in year 2009, and Japan’s GDP per capita ranking, while having dropped from world’s number 2 in 1993 to number 23 by 2008, was still far ahead of China’s which ranked beyond 100 (*ODN*, 9 August 2010).

⁶⁵ See taxonomy in Diamond (2002: 30-31), Table 2.

⁶⁶ Cited in Tong and Lei (2010: 499).

⁶⁷ Cited in Benton (2010: 321).

⁶⁸ Largely seen to be presently represented in the centre mainly by the still influential Jiang Zemin faction, though the real power configuration could be less simple.

⁶⁹ Largely seen to be presently represented by the Wen Jiabao faction, though again, the real power configuration could be more delicate.

⁷⁰ *Lianhe Zaobao* 联合早报 (Singapore newspaper), 19th July 2012.

⁷¹ Li's survey also found that as high as 73.66 per cent of respondents stated non-participation in any non-governmental organizations (NGO). In an interview by the Voice of America, Hu Xingdou 胡星斗, a professor of economics at the Beijing Institute of Technology (北京理工大学), opined that the proportion should correctly be 99 or 100 per cent due to the basic fact that the presently so-called "NGOs" in China could hardly be recognized as NGOs because Chinese law demanded government linkage or dependency for an "NGO" as such in most parts of the country, hence strictly speaking there were no real NGOs in China (Voice of America, as reported in *ODN*, 16th July 2012).

⁷² Accessing the article "李开盛：中国网民的政治与社会认知 —— 基于互联网的调查" [Li Kaisheng: the political and social notion of China's netizens – an Internet-based survey" (<http://www.21ccom.net/plus/view.php?aid=8089>) at Gongshiwang returned the line "文章被删除或正在审核中!!" [essay has been deleted or is being checked!!!] (accessed 16th July 2012).

⁷³ "In developing our democracy, we cannot simply copy bourgeois democracy, or introduce the system of a balance of three powers. I have often criticized people in power in the United States, saying that actually they have three governments. Of course, the American bourgeoisie uses this system in dealing with other countries, but when it comes to internal affairs, the three branches often pull in different directions, and that makes trouble. We cannot adopt such a system." – Deng Xiaoping, "Take a Clear-Cut Stand against Bourgeois Liberalization", 30th December 1986.

<<http://web.peopledaily.com.cn/english/dengxp/vol3/text/c1630.html>>

⁷⁴ See Yeoh (2010) for its adaptation for the Chinese context.

⁷⁵ As illustrated in Figure 21, a particular choice at the moment of crisis could thus lead to protracted cold stuckness, instead of a U-process of transformative change (Reeler, 2007: 12): in the case of China, a road not taken over two decades ago in 1989.